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# LEAVES OF GRASS

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# Leaves of Grass



By WALT WHITMAN

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*Introduction by* CARL SANDBURG

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CARLTON HOUSE • NEW YORK



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## INTRODUCTION

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In certain particulars Walt Whitman's book, "Leaves of Grass," stands by itself and is the most peculiar and noteworthy monument amid the work of American literature.

First, as to style. In a large and growing circle of readers and critics, it is regarded as the most original book, the most decisively individual, the most sublimely personal creation in American literary art.

Second, as to handling by critics and commentators. It is the most highly praised and the most deeply damned book that ever came from an American printing press as the work of an American writer; no other book can compete with it in the number of bouquets handed it by distinguished bystanders on one side of the street and in the number of hostile and nasty brickbats flung by equally distinguished bystanders on the other side of the street.

Third, as to personality. It is the most intensely personal book in American literature, living grandly to its promissory line, "who touches this touches a man," spilling its multitude of confessions with the bravery of a first-rate autobiography.

Fourth, as to scope of life work. It packs within its covers, does "Leaves of Grass," the life and thought and feeling of one man; it was first published when the author was 36 years of age and he actually never wrote another book even though he lived to be 73 years of age; what he did all the rest of his life after publishing the first edition

ated book America has produced—that is Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass."

"He is the poet who brought the slop-pail into the parlor," wrote one critic. "He is one of the sublime figures of all human annals, one to be set for companionship with Confucius, Socrates, and the teachers of high and sacred living," wrote another critic.

"The man was mad, mad beyond the cavil of a doubt," wrote Max Nordau. Another European critic, Gabriel Sarin, wrote: "He is the apostle of the idea that man is an indivisible fragment of the universal Divinity."

Walt Whitman is the only established epic poet of America. He is the single American figure that both American and European artists and critics most often put in a class or throw into a category with Shakespeare, Dante, Homer. He is the one American writer that Emerson, Burroughs, John Muir, Edward Carpenter, and similar observers enter in their lists as having a size in history and an importance of utterance that places him with Socrates, Confucius, Lao Tse, and the silver-grey men of the half-worlds who left the Bhagavad Gita and writings known most often as sacred.

In stature, pride, stride, and scope of personality, he is a challenger. He warns us to come with good teeth if we are to join in his menu—to bring along our rough weather clothes. He is likely any time to tip us out of the boat to see whether we swim or sink. And there are blanks to be filled in among his writings where he seems to have whispered, "I am going away now and I leave you alone to work it out for yourself—you came alone and you will have to go away alone."

Walt Whitman wrote his vital passages at the height of America's most stormily human period of history. "We

live in the midst of alarms; anxiety beclouds the future; we expect some new disaster with each newspaper we read," said Abraham Lincoln in the famous "Lost Speech" delivered the same year Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" was first published.

"Blood will flow . . . and brother's hand will be raised against brother!" was the passionate outcry of that same speech, which because of its tenor of violence was withheld from publication and distribution by its orator.

In this same decade, Charles A. Dana, managing editor of the *New York Tribune*, was writing: "It may be that the day of revolutions is past, but, if so, why are they there in such abundance? . . . Let others give aid and comfort to despots. Be it ours to stand for Liberty and Justice, nor fear to lock arms with those who are called hotheads and demagogues." The luminous fringes of romance attaching to those abstractions, "Liberty and Justice," as a result of the American and French revolutions, were still in the air. Dana wrote friendly explanations of just what the Frenchman, Proudhon, meant by his thesis, "Property is Robbery." Thoreau was writing an essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience." John Brown was stealing horses, running slaves by the underground railroad from slave to free soil, stocking arsenals, praying over strange, new projects. These all have their significance in showing the tint of the time spirit. Brook Farm, and its Utopian socialist outlooks, Fourier and his phalanxes of workmen, the 1848 revolutions, these were hot topics of the time. The far-reaching tides and backwashes of thought and emotion resulting from the French and American revolutions, and all that weave of circumstance touching the secession rights of states of the Union with its ramifications into chattel slavery, besides the swirl of

It is among the inarticulates of the primitive, the abysmal, on the borders where time, mystic dimensions, and the sphinxes of Nowhere ask their riddles, it is in this territory that Walt Whitman gives some people a grand everlasting thrill, while still other people get only a headache and a revulsion. "Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me, Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there," he murmurs in "Song of Myself," "Long I was hugg'd close—long and long."

"Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that decay in the muck, toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs," is a specimen of this borderland reporting. Or, "A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands; How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he . . . I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord."

Throughout "Leaves of Grass" there recurs often a wild soft laughter carrying the hint that it is impossible for a poet to tell you anything worth knowing unless you already know it and no song can be sung to you that will seem a song deeply worth hearing unless you have already in some strange, far-off fashion heard that song. An instance of this wild soft laughter is in the closing lines of "Song of Myself," where it is written:

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my  
gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable.  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd  
wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapour and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway run,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean.  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

What he is trying to sing is a theme fluid, flowing, elusive, and so he goes out of his way to flip in the face those who are too sure they are flying the same wild sea-winds with him. "Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me, already, behold! you see I have escaped you," he writes.

He is at a funeral looking into a coffin. A girl stands on her toes and joins him looking in on the white face in the black box. "You don't understand this, do you, my child?" he asks. "No," she answers. "Neither do I," is his muttered and kindly rejoinder.

The anecdote fits Whitman as feathers a duck. From such a poet might be expected the line, "I charge you forever reject those who would expound me."





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# LEAVES OF GRASS

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## INSCRIPTIONS

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### ONE'S-SELF I SING

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,  
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy  
for the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far  
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.

### AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE

As I ponder'd in silence,  
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,  
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,  
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,  
The genius of poets of old lands,  
As to me directing like flame its eyes,  
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,  
And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said,  
*Know'st thou not there is but one theme for*  
*ever-enduring bards?*  
*And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,*  
*The making of perfect soldiers.*



*Be it so, then I answer'd,  
I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater  
one than any,  
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight,  
advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,  
(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last),  
the field the world,  
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,  
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,  
I above all promote brave soldiers.*

IN CABIN'D SHIPS AT SEA

*In cabin'd ships at sea,  
The boundless blue on every side expanding,  
With whistling winds and music of the waves, the  
large imperious waves,  
Or some lone bark buoy'd on the dense marine,*

*Where joyous, full of faith, spreading white sails,  
She cleaves the ether mid the sparkle and the foam of day,  
or under many a star at night,  
By sailors young and old haply will I, a reminiscence of the  
land, be read,  
In full rapport at last.*

*Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,  
Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by  
them be said,  
The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck be-  
neath our feet,  
We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,  
The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast sugges-  
tions of the briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,*

*The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage,  
the melancholy rhythm,  
The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim  
are all here,  
And this is ocean's poem.*

Then falter not, O book, fulfil your destiny,  
You not a reminiscence of the land alone,  
You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether, purpos'd I know  
not whither, yet ever full of faith,  
Consort to every ship that sails, sail you!  
Bear forth to them folded my love (dear marines, for you I  
fold it here in every leaf);  
Speed on my book! spread your white sails, my little bark,  
athwart the imperious waves,  
Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me  
to every sea,  
This song for mariners and all their ships.

## TO FOREIGN LANDS

I heard that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle  
the New World,  
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,  
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them  
what you wanted.

## TO A HISTORIAN

You who celebrate bygones,  
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races,  
the life that has exhibited itself,  
Who have treated of man as the creature of politics, aggregates,  
rulers, and priests,

I, habitan of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in  
himself in his own rights,  
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited  
itself (the great pride of man in himself),  
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,  
I project the history of the future.

TO THEE, OLD CAUSE

To thee, old cause!  
Thou peerless, passionate, good cause,  
Thou stern, remorseless, sweet idea,  
Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands,  
After a strange sad war, great war for thee,  
  
(I think all war through time was really fought, and ever  
will be really fought, for thee),  
These chants for thee, the eternal march of thee.

(A war, O soldiers, not for itself alone,  
Far, far more stood silently waiting behind, now to advance in this book.)  
Thou orb of many orbs!  
Thou seething principle! thou well-kept, latent  
germ! thou centre!

Around the idea of thee the war revolving,  
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,  
(With vast results to come for thrice a thousand years),  
These recitatives for thee—my book and the war are one,  
Merged in its spirit I and mine, as the contest  
hinged on thee,  
As a wheel on its axis turns, this book unwitting to itself,  
Around the idea of thee.

## EIDÓLONS

I met a seer,  
Passing the hues and objects of the world,  
The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,  
To glean eidólons.

Put in thy chants, said he,  
No more the puzzling hour nor day, nor segments,  
parts, put in,  
Put first before the rest as light for all and  
entrance-song of all,  
That of eidólons.

Ever the dim beginning,  
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle,  
Ever the summit and the merge at last (to  
surely start again),  
Eidólons! eidólons!

Ever the mutable,  
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering,  
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,  
Issuing eidólons.

Lo, I or you,  
Or woman, man, or state, known and unknown,  
We seeming solid wealth, strength, beauty build,  
But really build eidólons.

The ostent evanescent,  
The substance of an artist's mood or savant's studies long,

Or warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,  
To fashion his eidólon.

Of every human life,  
(The units gather'd, posted, not a thought, emotion,  
deed, left out),  
The whole or large or small summ'd, added up,  
In its eidólon.

The old, old urge,  
Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo,  
newer, higher pinnacles,  
From science and the modern still impell'd,  
The old, old urge, eidólons.

The present now and here,  
America's busy, teeming, intricate whirl,  
Of aggregate and segregate for only thence releasing,  
To-day's eidólons.

These with the past,  
Of vanish'd lands, of all the reigns of kings across the sea,  
Old conquerors, old campaigns, old sailors' voyages,  
Joining eidólons.

Densities, growth, facades,  
Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees,  
Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave,  
Eidólons everlasting.

Exalté, rapt, ecstatic,  
The visible but their womb of birth,  
Of orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape,  
The mighty earth-eidólon.

All space, all time,  
(The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns,  
Swelling, collapsing, ending, serving their longer, shorter  
use),  
Fill'd with eidólons only.

The noiseless myriads,  
The infinite oceans where the rivers empty,  
The separate countless free identities, like eyesight,  
The true realities, eidólons.

Not this the world,  
Nor these the universes, they the universes,  
Purport and end, ever the permanent life of life,  
Eidólons, eidólons.

Beyond thy lectures learn'd professor,  
Beyond thy telescope or spectroscope, observer keen;  
beyond all mathematics,  
Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy, beyond the chemist  
with his chemistry,  
The entities of entities, eidólons.

Unfix'd yet fix'd,  
Ever shall be, ever have been and are,  
Sweeping the present to the infinite future,  
Eidólons, eidólons, eidólons.

The prophet and the bard,  
Shall yet maintain themselves, in higher stages yet,  
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret  
yet to them,  
God and eidólons.

## ON JOURNEYS THROUGH THE STATES

On journeys through the States we start,  
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,  
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea),  
We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves  
and passing on,  
And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as  
much as the seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town,  
We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast valley of  
the Mississippi, and the Southern States,  
We confer on equal terms with each of the States,  
We make trial of ourselves and invite men and  
women to hear,  
We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, promulge the body and the soul,  
Dwell a while and pass on, be copious,  
temperate, chaste, magnetic,  
And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,  
And may be just as much as the seasons.

## TO A CERTAIN CANTATRICE

Here, take this gift,  
I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,  
One who should serve the good old cause, the great idea,  
the progress and freedom of the race,  
Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel;  
But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you just as  
much as to any.

## ME IMPERTURBE

Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst  
of irrational things,  
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes,  
less important than I thought,  
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or the  
Tennessee, or far north or inland,  
A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of  
these States or of the coast, or the lakes or Kanada,  
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be  
self-balanced for contingencies,  
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, re-  
buffs, as the trees and animals do.

## SAVANTISM

Thither as I look I see each result and glory retracing itself  
and nestling close, always obligated,  
Thither hours, months, years—thither trades, compacts, es-  
tablishments, even the most minute,  
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils,  
politics, persons, estates;  
Thither we also, I with my leaves and  
songs, trustful, admirant,  
As a father to his father going takes his children  
along with him.

## THE SHIP STARTING

Lo, the unbounded sea,  
On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails, carrying  
even her moonsails,



The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so  
stately—below emulous waves press forward,  
They surround the ship with shining, curving  
motions and foam.

### I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be  
blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or  
leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the  
deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter  
singing as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the  
morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife  
at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of  
young fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

### WHAT PLACE IS BESIEGED?

What place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?  
Lo, I send to that place a commander,  
swift, brave, immortal,  
And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,  
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

## STILL THOUGH THE ONE I SING

Still though the one I sing,  
(One, yet of contradictions made), I  
dedicate to Nationality,  
I leave in him revolt (O latent right of insurrection! O  
quenchless, indispensable fire!)

## SHUT NOT YOUR DOORS

Shut not your doors to me, proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves,  
yet needed most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it everything.  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt  
by the intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

## POETS TO COME

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater  
than before known,  
Arouse! for you must justify me.  
I myself but write one or two indicative words  
for the future,  
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back  
in the darkness.  
I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping,  
turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face  
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
Expecting the main things from you.

## TO YOU

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me,  
why should you not speak to me?  
And why should I not speak to you?

## THOU READER

Thou reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,  
Therefore for thee the following chants.

# STARTING FROM PAUMANOK

---



## 1

Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,  
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,  
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,  
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,  
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a  
miner in California,  
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my  
drink from the spring,  
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,  
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing  
rapt and happy,  
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware  
of mighty Niagara,  
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute  
and strong-breasted bull,  
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars,  
rain, snow, my amaze,  
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight of  
the mountain-hawk,  
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush  
from the swamp-cedars,  
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

## 2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,  
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,  
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This then is life,  
Here is what has come to the surface after so many  
throes and convulsions.

How curious! how real!  
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,  
The ancestor-continents away group'd together,  
The present and future continents north and south, with  
the isthmus between.

See, vast trackless spaces,  
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,  
Countless masses debouch upon them,  
They are now cover'd with the foremost people,  
arts, institutions, known.

See, projected through time,  
For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,  
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,  
One generation playing its part and passing on,  
Another generation playing its part and passing on  
in its turn,  
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards  
me to listen,  
With eyes retrospective towards me.

## 3

Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!  
Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!  
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,  
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to  
the Mexican sea,  
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa,  
Wisconsin, and Minnesota,  
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas,  
and thence equi-distant,  
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

4

Take my leaves America, take them South and  
take them North,  
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are  
your own off-spring,  
Surround them East and West, for they  
would surround you,  
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they  
connect lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times,  
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,  
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return  
and study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?  
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

5

Dead poets, philosophers, priests,  
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,  
Language-shapers on other shores,  
Nations once powerful, now reduced,  
withdrawn, or desolate,

I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have  
left wafted hither,  
I have perused it, own it is admirable (moving  
awhile among it),  
Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever de-  
serve more than it deserves,  
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,  
I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,  
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the  
flame of materials,  
Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd,  
The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms,  
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,  
Yes, here comes my mistress the soul.

## 6

The soul,  
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—  
longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to  
be the most spiritual poems,  
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of  
my soul and of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may  
under any circumstances be subjected  
to another State,  
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day  
and by night between all the States, and between any  
two of them,

And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of  
    weapons with menacing points,  
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces;  
And a song make I out of the One form'd out of all,  
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,  
Resolute warlike One including and over all  
(However high the head of any else that head is over all).

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,  
I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute  
    courteously every city large and small,  
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is  
    heroism upon land and sea,  
And I will report all heroism from an American  
    point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,  
I will show what alone must finally compact these,  
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love,  
    indicating it in me,  
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that  
    were threatening to consume me,  
I will lift what has too long kept down  
    those smouldering fires,  
I will give them complete abandonment,  
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,  
For who but I should understand love with all its  
    sorrow and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,  
I advance from the people in their own spirit,  
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.



Omnes! omnes! let others ignore what they may,  
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,  
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is—  
and I say there is in fact no evil,  
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land  
or to me, as any thing else).  
I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a  
religion, I descend into the arena,  
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the  
winner's pealing shouts,  
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and  
soar above everything).

Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are  
for religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,  
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,  
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how  
certain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States  
must be their religion,  
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;  
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,  
Nor land nor man or woman without religion).

## 8

What are you doing young man?  
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature,  
science, art, amours?  
These ostensible realities, politics, points?  
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well—against such I say not a word, I am  
    their poet also,  
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up  
    for religion's sake,  
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the  
    essential life of the earth,  
Any more than such are to religion.

9

What do you seek so pensive and silent?  
What do you need camerado?  
Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen, dear son—listen America, daughter or son,  
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and  
    yet it satisfies, it is great,  
But there is something else very great, it makes  
    the whole coincide,  
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands  
    sweeps and provides for all.

10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of  
    a greater religion,  
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

My comrade!

For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one:  
    rising inclusive and more resplendent,  
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the  
    greatness of Religion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,

Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and  
    flickering around me,  
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air  
    that we know not of,  
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,  
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,  
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds  
    me to him,  
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all  
    the spiritual world,  
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities! O divine average!  
Warblings under the sun, usher'd, as now, or at  
    noon, or setting,  
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them,  
    and cheerfully pass them forward.

## 11

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,  
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her  
    nest in the briers hatching her brood.  
I have seen the he-bird also,  
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat  
    and joyfully singing.  
And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang  
    for was not there only,  
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back  
    by the echoes,  
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,  
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

12

Democracy! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating  
itself and joyfully singing.

Ma femme! for the brood beyond us and of us,  
For those who belong here and those to come,  
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols  
stronger and haughtier than have ever yet been  
heard upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,  
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with  
kindred eyes, and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,  
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and  
goes forward and is not dropt by death;  
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will  
be the bard of personality,  
And I will show of male and female that either is but the  
equal of the other,  
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I  
am determin'd to tell you with courageous clear voice  
to prove you illustrious,  
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present,  
and can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may  
be turn'd to beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more  
beautiful than death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and  
events are compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles,  
each as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with  
reference to ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with refer-  
ence to all days,  
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem  
but has reference to the soul,  
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find  
there is no one nor any particle of one but has refer-  
ence to the soul.

## 13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?  
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances,  
beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the  
rocks, and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;  
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,  
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners  
and pass to fitting spheres,  
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth  
to the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression,  
the meaning, the main concern,  
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's  
substance and life return in the body and the soul,  
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main  
concern, and includes and is the soul;

Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your  
body, or any part of it!

14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?  
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth  
and indicative hand?

Toward the male of the States, and toward the female  
of the States,

Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!

Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of  
cotton, sugar, rice!

Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of  
the apple and the grape!

Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world!  
land of those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!

Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!  
Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where  
the south-west Colorado winds!

Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!

Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!

Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of  
Vermont and Connecticut!

Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!

Land of boatmen and sailors! fisherman's land!

Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together!  
the passionate ones!

The side by side! the elder and younger  
brothers! the bony-limb'd!

The great woman's land! the feminine! the experienced  
sisters and the inexperienced sisters!  
Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the  
diverse! the compact!  
The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!  
O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I  
at any rate include you all with perfect love!  
I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any  
sooner than another!  
O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour  
with irrepressible love,  
Walking New England, a friend, a traveller,  
Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples  
on Paumanok's sands,  
Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling  
in every town,  
Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,  
Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,  
Of and through the States as during life, each man and  
woman my neighbour,  
The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as  
near to him and her,  
The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet  
with any of them,  
Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my  
house of adobie,  
Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State  
or in Maryland,  
Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and  
ice welcome to me,  
Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or  
the Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire State,

Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet wel-  
coming every new brother,  
Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the  
hour they unite with the old ones,  
Coming among the new ones myself to be their com-  
panion and equal, coming personally to you now,  
Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me,  
(I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent  
to give myself really to you, but what of that?  
Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,  
Bearded, sun-burnt, grey-neck'd, forbidding,  
I have arrived,  
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes  
of the Universe,  
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.

16

On my way a moment I pause,  
Here for you! and here for America!  
Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States  
I harbinger glad and sublime,  
And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of  
the red aborigines.

The red aborigines,  
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as



of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to  
us for names,  
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,  
Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,  
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa,  
Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,  
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charg-  
ing the water and the land with names.

## 17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,  
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent,  
quick, and audacious,  
A world primal again, vistas of glory  
incessant and branching,  
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far,  
with new contests,  
New politics, new literatures and religions, new  
inventions and arts.

These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no  
more but arise,  
You oceans that have been calm within me! how I feel you,  
fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented  
waves and storms.

## 18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,  
See, in my poems immigrants continually  
coming and landing,  
See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut, the  
flat-boat, the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude fence,  
and the backwoods village,

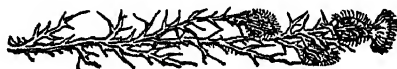
See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the  
Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my  
poems as upon their own shores,  
See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild  
and tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless herds of  
buffalo feeding on short curly grass,  
See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved  
streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless  
vehicles, and commerce.  
See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the  
electric telegraph stretching across the continent,  
See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe  
reaching, pulses of Europe duly return'd,  
See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs, panting,  
blowing the steam-whistle,  
See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging  
mines—see, the numberless factories,  
See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from  
among them superior judges, philosophers, Presidents,  
emerge, drest in working dresses,  
See lounging through the shops and fields, of the States,  
me well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,  
Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints  
come at last.

19

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.  
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!  
O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!  
O now I triumph—and you shall also;  
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more  
desirer and lover!  
O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.

## SONG OF MYSELF

---



### I

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear  
of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this  
soil, this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and  
their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are,  
but never forgotten,  
I harbour for good or bad, I permit to speak  
at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

### 2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are  
crowded with perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall  
not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the  
distillation, it is odourless,

It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,

I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised  
and naked,

I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,

Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread,  
crotch, and vine,

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart,  
the passing of blood and air through my lungs,

The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore  
and dark-colour'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,

The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the  
eddies of the wind,

A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching  
around of arms,

The play of shine and shade on the trees as the  
supple boughs wag,

The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the  
fields and hill-sides,

The feeling of health, the full-moon trill, the song of me  
rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you  
reckon'd the earth much?

Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the  
origin of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun (there are  
millions of suns left),

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor  
look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the  
spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take  
things from me,  
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

## 3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the  
beginning and the end,  
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.  
Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.  
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase, always sex,  
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a  
breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that  
it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well  
entretied, braced in the beams,  
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,  
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that  
is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst  
    age vexes age,  
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things,  
    while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe  
    and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any  
    man hearty and clean,  
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall  
    be less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;  
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side  
    through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the  
    day with stealthy tread,  
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling  
    the house with their plenty,  
Shall I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream  
    at my eyes,  
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,  
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,  
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and  
    which is ahead?

## 4

Trippers and askers surround me,  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the  
    ward and city I live in, or the nation,  
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors  
    old and new,  
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,

The real or fancied indifference of some man or  
woman I love,  
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or  
loss or lack of money, or depressions of exaltations,  
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful  
news, the fitful events;  
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
But they are not the Me myself.  
Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,  
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating,  
idle, unitary,  
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an  
impalpable certain rest,  
Looking with side-curved head curious what  
will come next,  
Both in and out of the game and watching and  
wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through  
fog with linguists and contenders,  
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

## 5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase  
itself to you,  
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,  
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lec-  
ture, not even the best,  
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent  
summer morning,

How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently  
turn'd over upon me,  
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged  
your tongue to my bare-stript heart,  
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you  
held my feet.

{ Swiftly rose and spread around me the peace and knowl-  
edge that pass all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and  
the women my sisters and lovers,  
And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder,  
mullein, and poke-weed.

6

A child said, *What is the grass?* fetching it to me  
with full hands;

How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is  
any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful  
green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we  
may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe  
of the vegetation.



Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones  
and narrow zones,  
Growing among black folks as among white,  
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the  
same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken  
soon out of their mothers' laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads  
of old mothers,  
Darker than the colourless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of  
mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young  
men and women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the off-  
spring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the  
women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,

And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait  
at the end to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one  
supposed, and luckier.

## 7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?  
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and  
I know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd  
babe, and am not contain'd between my hat and boots,  
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and  
every one good,  
The earth good and the stars good, and their  
adjuncts all good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,  
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal  
and fathomless as myself,  
(They do not know how immortal, but I know).

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine  
male and female,  
For me those that have been boys and that love women,  
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings  
to be slighted,  
For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers  
and the mothers of mothers,  
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,  
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrapel you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,  
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,  
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot  
be shaken away.

## 8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush  
away flies with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up  
the bushy hill,  
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the  
pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk  
of the promenaders,  
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating  
thumb, the clank of the shod horses on  
the granite floor,  
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts  
of snow-balls,  
The hurrahs for popular favourites, the fury  
of rous'd mobs,  
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne  
to the hospital,  
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the  
blows and fall,  
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly  
working his passage to the centre of the crowd,

The impassive stones that receive and return  
so many echoes,  
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck  
or in fits,  
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry  
home and give birth to babes,  
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here,  
what howls restrain'd by decorum,  
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, ac-  
ceptances, rejections with convex lips,  
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come  
and I depart.

## 9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,  
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the  
slow-drawn wagon,  
The clear light plays on the brown grey  
and green intertinged,  
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,  
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,  
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the  
clover and timothy,  
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

## 10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,

Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun  
by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the  
sparkle and scud,  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joy-  
ously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and  
stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had  
a good time;  
You should have been with us that day round  
the chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far  
west, the bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and  
dumbly smoking, they had moccasins to their feet and  
large thick blankets hanging from their shoulders,  
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in  
skins, his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck,  
he held his bride by the hand,  
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse  
straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs  
and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him  
limpsy and weak,  
And went where he sat on a log and led him in  
and assured him,

And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body  
and bruise'd feet,  
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave  
him some coarse clean clothes,  
And remembered perfectly well his revolving eyes  
and his awkwardness,  
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his  
neck and ankles;  
He stayed with me a week before he was recuperated  
and pass'd north,  
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd  
in the corner.

## 11

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;  
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the  
window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
Ah, the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to lady, for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your  
room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-  
ninth bather,  
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glistened with wet, it ran  
from their long hair,  
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies  
bulge to the sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to  
them,  
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant  
and bending arch,  
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

## 12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his  
knife at the stall in the market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-  
down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,  
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great  
heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their move-  
ments,  
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their mas-  
sive arms,  
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand  
so sure,  
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

## 13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the  
block swags underneath on its tied-over chain,  
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard,  
steady and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the  
string-piece,  
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and  
loosens over his hip-band,  
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch  
of his hat away from his forehead,  
The sun falls on his crispy hair and moustache, falls on the  
black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do  
not stop there,  
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as  
well as forward sluing,  
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person  
or object missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy  
shade, what is that you express in your eyes?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my  
distant and day-long ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes, ✓  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,



And consider green and violet and the  
tufted crown intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is  
not something else,  
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet  
trills pretty well to me,  
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

## 14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
*Ya-honk* he says, and sounds it down to me  
like an invitation,  
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,  
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-  
sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,  
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with  
her half-spread wings,  
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs  
a hundred affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the  
ocean or woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of  
axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that  
    will take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

## 15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his fore-  
    plane whistles its wild ascending lisp,  
The married and unmarried children ride home to  
    their Thanksgiving dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with  
    a strong arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and  
    harpoon are ready,  
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of  
    the big wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day  
    loafe and looks at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in  
    his mother's bedroom);  
The jour printer with grey head and gaunt jaws works  
    at his case,  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr  
    with the manuscript;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;

The quadrone girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunk-  
ard nods by the bar-room stove,

The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels  
his beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass,

The young fellow drives the express-wagon (I love him,  
though I do not know him);

The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete  
in the race,

The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some  
lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,

Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position,  
levels his piece;

The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the  
wharf or levee,

As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer  
views them from his saddle,

The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for  
their partners, the dancers bow to each other,

The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks  
to the musical rain,

The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps  
fill the Huron,

The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering  
moccasins and bead-bags for sale,

The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with  
half-shut eyes bent sideways,

As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is  
thrown for the shore-going passengers,

The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister  
winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then  
for the knots,

The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week  
ago borne her first child,

The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in the factory or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,  
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun (how the white sails sparkle!)  
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,  
The pedlar sweats with his pack on his back (the purchaser haggling about the odd cent);  
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,  
The opium-eater declines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,  
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,  
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,  
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you);  
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,  
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,  
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,

The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares  
and his cattle,

As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice  
by the jingling of loose change,

The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning  
the roof, the masons are calling for mortar,

In single file each shouldering his hod pass  
onward the labourers;

Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is  
gather'd, it is the fourth of the Seventh-month (what  
salutes of cannon and small arms!)

Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the  
mower mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground;  
Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the  
hole in the frozen surface,

The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter  
strikes deep with his axe,

Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the  
cotton-wood or pecan-trees,

Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or  
through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through  
those of the Arkansas,

Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the  
Chattahooche or Altamahaw,

✓ Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-  
grandsons around them,

In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trap-  
pers after their day's sport,

The city sleeps and the country sleeps,

The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,

The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband  
sleeps by his wife;

And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,

And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

## 16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,  
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,  
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the  
stuff that is fine,  
One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same  
and the largest the same, .  
A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant  
and hospitable down by the Oconee I live,  
A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints  
the limberest joints on earth and the sternest  
joints on earth,  
A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-  
skin leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,  
A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a  
Hoosier, Badger, Buckeye;  
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with  
fisherman off Newfoundland,  
At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the  
rest and tacking,  
At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine,  
or in the Texan ranch,  
Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Western-  
ers (loving their big proportions),  
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who  
shake hands and welcome to drink and meat,  
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfulest,  
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,  
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,

A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,  
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist anything better than my own diversity,  
Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,  
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,  
The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are  
in their place,  
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is  
in its place.)

## 17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and  
lands, they are not original with me,  
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or  
next to nothing,  
If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle  
they are nothing,  
If they are not just as close as they are distant  
they are nothing.  
This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and  
the water is,  
This is the common air that bathes the globe.

## 18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,  
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches  
for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?  
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit  
in which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,  
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and  
gayest for them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd,  
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!  
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!  
And to all generals that lost engagements, and  
all overcome heroes!  
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the  
greatest heroes known!

19

This is the meal equally set, this is the meat  
for natural hunger,  
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make  
appointments with all,  
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,  
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;  
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and  
odour of hair,  
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the  
murmur of yearning,  
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,  
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?  
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the  
mica on the side of a rock has.



Do you take it I would astonish?  
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twit-  
tering through the woods?  
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,  
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

## 20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;  
How is it that I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,  
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,  
That months are vacuums and the ground but  
wallow and filth.

Whimpering and truckling, fold with powders for invalids,  
conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,  
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate  
and be ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analysed to a hair, coun-  
sell'd with doctors and calculated close,  
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one  
a barleycorn less,  
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,  
To me the converging objects of the  
    universe perpetually flow,  
All are written to me, and I must get what  
    the writing means.

I know I am deathless,  
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by  
    a carpenter's compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a  
    burnt stick at night.

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself  
    or be understood,  
I see that the elementary laws never apologise,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my  
    house by, after all).

I exist as I am, that is enough,  
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,  
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and  
    that is myself,  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand  
    or ten million years,  
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness  
    I can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
And I know the amplitude of time.

## 21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell  
are with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I trans-  
late into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,  
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,  
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?  
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and  
still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close  
magnetic nourishing night!  
Night of south winds—night of the large few stars  
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of departed sunset—earth of  
the mountains misty-topt!  
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just  
tinged with blue!

Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!  
Earth of the limpid grey of clouds brighter and clearer  
for my sake!  
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!  
Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to  
you give love!  
O unspeakable passionate love.

22

You seal! I resign myself to you also—I guess  
what you mean,  
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,  
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,  
We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of  
sight of land,  
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,  
Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,  
Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,  
Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd  
yet always-ready graves,  
Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,  
I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and  
of all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of  
hate and conciliation,  
Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each other's arms.

I am he attesting sympathy,  
(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the  
house that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be  
the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?  
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me,  
I stand indifferent,  
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,  
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of  
the unflagging pregnancy?  
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd  
over and rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance,  
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,  
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse  
and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,  
There is no better than it and now.

What behaves well in the past or behaves well to-day is not  
such a wonder,  
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean  
man or an infidel.

Endless unfolding of words of ages!  
And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,  
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I  
accept Time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all,  
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
Materialism first and last imbuig.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!  
Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,  
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a  
grammar of the old cartouches,  
These mariners put the ship through  
dangerous unknown seas,  
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this  
is a mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honours always!  
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,  
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,  
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of  
freedom and extrication,  
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and  
favour men and women fully equipt,  
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and  
them that plot and conspire.

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,  
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, and breeding,

No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or  
apart from them,  
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!  
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me  
the current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the  
sign of democracy,  
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their  
counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of  
prisoners and slaves,  
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of  
thieves and dwarfs,  
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs  
and of the father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,  
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,  
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the  
head and heart,  
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,  
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and  
tag of me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I  
touch or am touch'd from,  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,  
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the  
spread of my own body, or any part of it,  
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!  
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!  
Firm masculine colter it shall be you!  
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!  
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings  
of my life!

Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!  
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!  
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of  
guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!  
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!  
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it  
shall be you!  
Sun so generous it shall be you!  
Vapours lighting and shading my face it shall be you!  
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!  
Winds whose salt-tickling genitals rub against me it  
shall be you!



Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounge  
in my winding paths, it shall be you!  
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever  
touch'd, it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,  
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,  
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of  
my faintest wish,  
Nor the cause of friendship I emit, nor the cause of the  
friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,  
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the  
metaphysics of books.

To behold the day-break!  
The little light fades the immense  
and diaphanous shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently  
rising, freshly exuding,  
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,  
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky stayed with, the daily close  
of their junction,  
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment  
over my head,  
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

25

Dazzling and tremendous, how quick the sun-rise  
would kill me,  
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own, O my soul, in the calm and cool  
of the daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and  
volumes of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal  
to measure itself,  
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
*Walt, you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?*

Come now I will not be tantalised, you conceive too  
much of articulation,  
Do you not know, O speech, how the buds beneath  
you are folded?  
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,  
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,  
I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the  
meaning of all things,  
Happiness (which whoever hears me let him or her set out  
in search of this day).

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what  
I really am,

Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply  
    looking toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,  
I carry the plenum of proof and everything else in my face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the sceptic.

## 26

Now I will do nothing but listen,  
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds  
    contribute toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of  
    flames, clack of sticks, cooking my meals,  
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice.

I hear all sounds running together, combined,  
    fused, or following,  
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the  
    day and night,  
Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud  
    laugh of work-people at their meals,  
The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones  
    of the sick,  
The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pro-  
    nouncing a death-sentence,  
The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the  
    wharves, the refrain of the anchor-lifters,  
The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-  
    streaking engines and hose-carts with premonitory  
    tinkles and colour'd lights,

The steam whistle, the solid roll of the train  
of approaching cars,  
The slow march play'd at the head of the association  
marching two and two,  
(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped  
with black muslin).

I hear the violoncello ('tis the young  
man's heart's complaint),  
I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my ears,  
It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,  
Ah, this indeed is music—this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)  
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,  
It wrenches such ardours from me I did not know  
I possess'd them,  
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by  
the indolent waves,  
I am cut by bitter and angry hair, I lose my breath,  
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in  
fakes of death,  
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
And that we call Being.

## 27

To be in any form, what is that?  
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever  
come back thither),

If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous  
shell were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,  
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,  
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,  
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as  
I can stand.

## 28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,  
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,  
Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is  
hardly different from myself,  
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,  
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,  
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,  
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,  
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,  
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the  
sunlight and pasture-fields,  
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,  
They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the  
edges of me,  
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength  
or my anger,  
Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,  
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.  
  
The sentries desert every other part of me,  
They have left me helpless to a red marauder,

They all come to the headland to witness and  
assist against me.

I am given up by traitors,  
I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am  
the greatest traitor,  
I went myself first to the headland, my own hands  
carried me there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight  
in its throat,  
Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd,  
hooded, sharp-tooth'd touch!  
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment  
of perpetual loan,  
Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb  
prolific and vital,  
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

30

All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
And a compend of compends is the meat of a  
    man or woman,  
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have  
    for each other,  
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until  
    it becomes omnific,  
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

## 31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work  
    of the stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and  
    the egg of the wren,  
And the tree-load is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,  
And the running blackberry would adorn the  
    parlours of heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to  
    scorn all machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head  
    surpasses any statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger  
    sextillions of infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits,  
    grains, esculent roots,

And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,  
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
But call anything back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,  
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat  
    against my approach,  
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its  
    own powder'd bones,  
In vain objects stand leagues off and  
    assume manifold shapes,  
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great  
    monsters lying low,  
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,  
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,  
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,  
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,  
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure  
    of the cliff.

## 32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so  
    placid and self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania  
    of owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thou-  
    sands of years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.



So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly  
in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and  
negligently drop them?  
Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,  
Not too exclusive toward the reachers  
of my remembrancers,  
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him  
on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive  
to my caresses,  
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely  
cut, flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race  
around and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?  
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,  
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,

What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,  
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars  
of the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,  
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts,  
camping with lumbermen,  
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch  
and rivulet bed,  
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and  
parsnips, crossing savannas, trailing in forests,  
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of  
a new purchase,  
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat  
down the shallow river,  
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead,  
where the buck turns furiously at the hunter,  
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock,  
where the otter is feeding on fish,  
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps  
by the bayou,  
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey,  
where the beaver pats the mud with his  
paddle-shaped tail;  
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton  
plant, over the rice in its low moist field,  
Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum  
and slender shoots from the gutters,  
Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn,  
over the delicate blue-flower flax,

Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and  
buzzer there with the rest,  
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades  
in the breeze;  
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding  
on by low scragged limbs,  
Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the  
leaves of the brush,  
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods  
and the wheatlot,  
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the  
great goldbug drops through the dark,  
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and  
flows to the meadow,  
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous  
shuddering of their hides,  
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where and-  
irons straddle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in  
festoons from the rafters;  
Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is  
whirling its cylinders,  
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes  
under its ribs,  
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft (floating in  
it myself and looking composedly down),  
Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where the  
heat hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,  
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and  
never forsakes it,  
Where the steamship trails hind-ways its long  
pennant of smoke,  
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black ship out  
of the water,

Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,  
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead  
    are corrupting below;  
Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head  
    of the regiments,  
Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,  
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil  
    over my countenance,  
Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of  
    hard wood outside,  
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good  
    game of base-ball,  
At the festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license,  
    bull-dances, drinking, laughter,  
At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash,  
    sucking the juice through a straw,  
At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,  
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees,  
    huskings, house-raising;  
Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles,  
    cackles, screams, weeps,  
Where the hayrick stands in the barnyard, where the dry-  
    stalks are scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits  
    in the hovel,  
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where  
    the stud to the mare, where the cock is  
    treading the hen,  
Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food  
    with short jerks,  
Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless  
    and lonesome prairie,  
Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the  
    square miles far and near,

Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the  
long-lived swan is curving and winding,  
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she  
laughs her near-human laugh,  
Where bee-hives range on a grey bench in the garden half  
hid by the high weeds,  
Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the  
ground with their heads out,  
Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,  
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow  
and icicled trees,  
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the  
marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs,  
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools  
the warm noon,  
Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the wal-  
nut-tree over the well,  
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with  
silver-wired leaves,  
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or  
under conical firs,  
Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon,  
through the office or public hall;  
Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd  
with the new and old,  
Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,  
Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet  
and talks melodiously,  
Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of  
the whitewash'd church,  
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist  
preacher, impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting;

Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole  
forenoon, flattening the flesh of my nose on the  
thick plate glass,  
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turned up to  
the clouds, or down a lane or along the beach,  
My right and left arms around the sides of two friends, and  
I in the middle;  
Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy  
(behind me he rides at the drape of the day),  
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals'  
feet, or the moccasin print,  
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to  
a feverish patient,  
Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining  
with a candle;  
Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,  
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and  
fickle as any,  
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,  
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone  
from me a long while,  
Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle  
God by my side,  
Speeding through space, speeding through heaven  
and the stars,  
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and  
the diameter of eighty thousand miles,  
Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls  
like the rest,  
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother  
in its belly,  
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,

Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,  
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,  
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look  
at quintillions green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,  
My course runs below the soundings of plummet.

I help myself to material and immaterial,  
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their  
returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with  
a pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of  
brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,  
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,  
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on  
the wonderful beauty,  
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the  
scenery is plain in all directions,  
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out  
my fancies toward them,  
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we  
are soon to be engaged,

We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass  
with still feet and caution,  
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast  
and ruin'd city,  
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living  
cities of the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,  
I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with  
the bride myself,  
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail  
of the stairs,  
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drowned.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck  
of the steamship, and Death chasing it up and  
down the storm,  
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was  
faithful of days and faithful of nights,  
And chalked in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer,  
we will not desert you;*  
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three  
days and would not give it up,  
How he saved the drifting company at last,  
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated  
from the side of their prepared graves,  
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and  
the sharp-lipp'd unshaven men;



All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well,  
it becomes mine,  
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,  
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry  
wood, her children gazing on,  
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the  
fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat,  
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the  
murderous buckshot and the bullets,  
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again  
crack the marksmen,  
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with  
the ooze of my skin,  
I fall on the weeds and stones,  
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head  
with whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself  
become the wounded person,  
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a  
cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,  
Tumbling walls buried me in their débris,  
Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts  
of my comrades,

I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,  
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly  
lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is  
for my sake,  
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,  
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads  
are bared of their fire-caps,  
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,  
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am  
the clock myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,  
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,  
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,  
Workmen searching after damages,  
making indispensable repairs,  
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the  
fan-shaped explosion,  
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high  
in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously  
waves with his hand,  
He gasps through the clot, *Mind not me—  
mind—the entrenchments.*

## 34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,  
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,  
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,  
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo),  
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred  
and twelve young men.

Retreating they had formed in a hollow square with their  
baggage for breastworks,  
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, nine  
times their number, was the price they  
took in advance,  
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,  
They treated for an honourable capitulation, receiv'd writ-  
ing and seal, gave up their arms and march'd back  
prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,  
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome,  
proud, and affectionate,  
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in  
squad and massacred, it was beautiful early summer,  
The work commenced about five o'clock and was  
over by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,  
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood  
    stark and straight,  
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living  
    and dead lay together,  
The main'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers  
    saw them there,  
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,  
These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the  
    blunts of muskets,  
A youth not seventeen years old seized his assassin till two  
    more came to release him,  
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;  
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and  
    twelve young men.

## 35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?  
Would you learn who won by the light of the  
    moon and stars?  
List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor told  
    it to me.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you (said he),  
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or  
    truer, and never was and never will be;  
Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled,  
    the cannon touch'd,  
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots  
under the water,  
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the  
first fire, killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,  
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on  
the gain, and five feet of water reported,  
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the  
afterhold to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt  
by the sentinels,  
They see so many strange faces they do not know  
whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire,  
The other asks if we demand quarter?  
If our colours are struck and the fighting done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of  
my little captain,  
*We have not struck*, he composedly cries, *we have just be-*  
*gun our part of the fighting.*

Only three guns are in use,  
One is directed by the captain himself against  
the enemy's mainmast,  
Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his mus-  
ketry and clear his decks.

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, espe-  
cially the main-top,  
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,  
The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward  
the powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally  
thought we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,  
He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,  
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they  
surrender to us.

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,  
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,  
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass  
to the one we have conquer'd,  
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders  
through a countenance white as a sheet,  
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,  
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and  
carefully curl'd whiskers,  
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering  
aloft and below,  
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet  
fit for duty,  
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs  
of flesh upon the masts and spars,  
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the  
soothe of waves,

Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-  
    parcels, strong scent,  
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,  
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and  
    fields by the shore, death-messages given in  
    charge to survivors,  
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth  
    of his saw,  
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream,  
    and long, dull, tapering groan,  
These so, these irretrievable.

## 37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms!  
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!  
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,  
See myself in prison shaped like another man,  
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines  
    and keep vwatch,  
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd  
    to him and walk by his side,  
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with  
    sweat on my twitching lips).

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and  
    am tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at  
    the last gasp,

My face is ash-colour'd, my sinews gnarl, away from  
me people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am  
embodied in them,  
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

## 38

Enough! enough! enough!  
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!  
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head,  
slumbers, dreams, gaping,  
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!  
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the  
bludgeons and hammers!  
That I could look with a separate look on my own cruci-  
fixion and bloody crowning.

I remember now,  
I resume the overstayed fraction,  
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it,  
or to any graves,  
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an  
average unending procession,  
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,  
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,  
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of  
thousands of years.

Eleves, I salute you! come forward!  
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.



## 39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?  
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors?  
is he Kanadian?

Is he from the Mississippi country?  
Iowa, Oregon, California?

The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor  
from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,  
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to  
them, stay with them.

Behaviour lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass,  
uncomb'd head, laughter, and naïveté,

Slow-stepping feet, common features, common  
modes and emanations,

They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,  
They are wafted with the odour of his body or breath,  
they fly out of the glance of his eyes.

## 40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!  
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,  
Say, old top-knot, what do you want?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,  
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in  
you, but cannot,

And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my  
nights and days.

Behold I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,  
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,  
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,  
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty  
and to spare,  
And anything I have I bestow.

I do not ask you who you are, that is not important to me,  
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I  
will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,  
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,  
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger  
and nimbler babes,  
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far  
more arrogant republics).

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob  
of the door,  
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,  
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man and raise him  
with resistless will,

O despairer, here is my neck,  
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole  
weight upon me.

I dilate with you tremendous breath, I buoy you up,  
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,  
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,  
No doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you,  
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,  
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell  
you is so.

## 41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant  
on their backs,  
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,  
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;  
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,  
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,  
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,  
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and  
Hercules his grandson,  
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,  
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf,  
the crucifix engraved,  
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every  
idol and image,

Taking them all for what they are worth and not  
a cent more,  
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,  
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to  
rise and fly and sing for themselves),  
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in  
myself, bestowing them freely on each man and  
woman I see,  
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,  
Putting higher claims for him in there with his roll'd-up  
sleeves driving the mallet and chisel,  
Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of  
smoke or a hair on the back of my hand just as curious  
as any revelation,  
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no  
less to me than the gods of the antique wars,  
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,  
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their  
white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;  
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple inter-  
ceding for every person born,  
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three  
lusty angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past  
and to come,  
Selling all he possesses, travelling on foot to fee lawyers  
for his brother and sit by him while he is  
tried for forgery;  
What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod  
about me, and not filling the square rod then,  
The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,  
Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,

The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time  
to be one of the supremes,  
The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good  
as the best, and be as prodigious;  
By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,  
Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb  
of the shadows.

## 42

A call in the midst of the crowd,  
My own voice, orotund, sweeping, and final.

Come, my children,  
Come, my boys and girls, my women,  
household and intimates,  
Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his  
prelude on the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of  
your climax and close.

My head slues round on my neck,  
Music rolls, but not from the organ,  
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,  
Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and down-  
ward sun, ever the air and the ceaseless tides,  
Ever myself and my neighbours, refreshing, wicked, real,  
Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb,  
that breath of itches and thirsts,  
Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one  
hides and bring him forth,

Ever love, ever sobbing liquid of life,  
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,  
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,  
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast  
    never once going,  
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff  
    for payment receiving,  
A few idly owning, and they the  
    wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,  
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars,  
    markets, newspapers, schools,  
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories,  
    stocks, stores, real estate, and personal estate.

The little plentiful mannikins skipping around in collars  
    and tail'd coats,  
I am aware who they are ( they are positively not  
    worms or fleas ),  
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and  
    shallowest is deathless with me,  
What I do and say the same waits for them,  
Every thought that flounders in me the same  
    flounders in them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,  
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,  
And would fetch you, whoever you are, flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,  
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;  
This printed and bound book—but the printer and the  
printing-office boy?  
The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close  
and solid in your arms?  
The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her  
turrets—but the pluck of the captain and engineers?  
In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the  
host and hostess, and the look out of their eyes?  
The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?  
The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?  
Sermons, creeds, theology—but the  
fathomless human brain,  
And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

## 43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,  
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,  
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between  
ancient and modern,  
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after  
five thousand years,  
Waiting responses from oracles, honouring the gods,  
saluting the sun,  
Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powwowing  
with sticks in the circle of obis,  
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps  
of the idols,  
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession,  
rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,  
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas  
admirant, minding the Koran,

Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone  
and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,  
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified,  
knowing assuredly that he is divine,  
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or  
sitting patiently in a pew,  
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis or waiting dead-  
like till my spirit arouses me,  
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of  
pavement and land,  
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and  
talk like a man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry,  
affected, dishearten'd, atheistical,  
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt,  
despair, and unbelief.

How the flukes slash!  
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and  
spouts of blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,  
I take my place among you as much as among any,  
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,  
And what is yet untried and afterwards is for you, me, all  
precisely the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,  
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient,  
and cannot fail.



Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd,  
not a single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,  
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,  
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then  
drew back and was never seen again,  
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels  
it with bitterness worse than gall,  
Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and  
the bad disorder,  
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the  
brutish koboo call'd the ordure of humanity,  
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food  
to slip in,  
Nor anything in the earth, or down in the oldest graves  
of the earth,  
Nor anything in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads  
of myriads that inhabit them,  
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

## 44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,  
I launch all men and women forward with me  
into the Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what  
does eternity indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of  
winters and summers,  
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,  
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my  
brother, my sister?  
I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or  
jealous upon me,  
All has been gentle with me, I keep no  
account of lamentation,  
(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of  
things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches  
between the steps,  
All below duly travell'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I  
was even there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept through  
the lethargic mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing  
like cheerful boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother  
generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing  
could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and  
deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete  
and delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

## 45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!  
O manhood, balanced, florid, and full.

My lovers suffocate me,  
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked  
to me at night,  
Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging  
and chirping over my head,  
Calling my name from flower-beds,  
vines, tangled underbrush,  
Lighting on every moment of my life,  
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,

Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving  
them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace  
of dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges  
what grows after and out of itself,  
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the  
far-sprinkled systems,  
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the  
rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread,  
expanding, always expanding,  
Outward and outward and for ever outward.

My sun has his sun and around him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the  
greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,  
If I, you, and the worlds, all beneath or upon their surfaces,  
were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it  
would not avail in the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then  
farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues.  
do not hazard the span or make it impatient,  
They are but parts, anything is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come  
    on perfect terms,  
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine  
    will be there.

## 46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never  
    measured and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut  
    from the woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,  
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and  
    the public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and  
    did not know,  
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds, dear son, and I will mine, and let  
    us hasten forth,  
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of  
your hand on my hip,  
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at  
the crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit, *When we become the enfolders of  
those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every  
thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*  
And my spirit said, *No, we but level that lift to pass  
and continue beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find  
out for yourself.

Sit a while, dear son,  
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,  
But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet  
clothes, I kiss you with a good-bye kiss and open the  
gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of  
every moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank  
by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me,  
shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

## 47

I am the teacher of athletes,  
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves  
the width of my own,  
He most honours my style who learns under it to  
destroy the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through de-  
rived power, but in his own right,  
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,  
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,  
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than  
sharp steel cuts,  
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff,  
to sing a song or play on the banjo,  
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-  
pox over all latherers,  
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?  
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,  
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time  
while I wait for a boat,  
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the  
tongue of you,  
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd).

I swear I will never again mention love or death  
inside a house,  
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him  
or her who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights  
or water-shore,  
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion  
of waves a key,  
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall  
take me with him all day,  
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound  
of my voice,  
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and  
seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,  
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I  
do not fail them,  
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that  
know me seek me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone  
in his blanket,  
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt  
of his wagon,  
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget  
where they are,  
They and all would resume what I have told them.

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,



And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,  
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to  
his own funeral drest in his shroud,  
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick  
of the earth,  
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod con-  
founds the learning of all times,  
And there is no trade or employment but the young man  
following it may become a hero,  
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for  
the wheel'd universe,  
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool  
and composed before a million universes.  
And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each am not  
curious about God,  
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about  
God and about death).

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God  
not in the least,  
Nor do I understand who there can be more  
wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and  
each moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own  
face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is  
sign'd by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that  
wheresoe'er I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you, Death, and you, bitter hug of mortality, it is  
idle to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,  
I see the elder-hand pressing, receiving, supporting,  
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,  
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you, Corpse, I think you are good manure, but  
that does not offend me,  
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,  
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd  
breasts of melons.

And as to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings  
of many deaths,  
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before).

I hear you whispering there, O stars of heaven,  
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual  
transfers and promotions,  
If you do not say anything how can I say anything?  
Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steeps of  
the souging twilight.

Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems  
that decay in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is  
noonday sunbeams reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring  
great or small.

## 50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know  
it is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then  
my body becomes,  
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose  
embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my  
brothers and sisters.

Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal  
life—it is Happiness.

## 51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd  
them, emptied them,  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listen up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only  
a minute longer).

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then, I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes).

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on  
the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through  
with his supper?

Who wishes to talk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove  
already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains  
of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on  
the shadow'd wilds,

It coaxes me to the vapour and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

## CHILDREN OF ADAM

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### TO THE GARDEN THE WORLD

To the garden the world anew ascending,  
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,  
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,  
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,  
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having  
    brought me again,  
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,  
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through  
    them, for reasons, most wondrous,  
Existing I peer and penetrate still,  
Content with the present, content with the past,  
By my side or back of me Eve following,  
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

### FROM PENT-UP ACHING RIVERS

From pent-up aching rivers,  
From that of myself without which I were nothing,  
From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I  
    stand sole among men,  
From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,  
Singing the song of procreation,  
Singing the need of superb children and therein  
    superb grown people,  
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,  
Singing the bedfellow's song (O resistless yearning!  
O for any and each the body correlative attracting!

O for you, whoever you are, your correlative body! O it,  
more than all else, you delighting!)

From the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day,  
From native moments, from bashful pains, singing them,  
Seeking something yet unfound though I have diligently  
sought it many a long year,  
Singing the true song of the soul fitful at random,  
Renascent with grossest Nature or among animals,  
Of that, of them and what goes with them  
my poems informing,  
Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of birds,  
Of the wet woods, of the lapping of waves,  
Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land,  
I them chanting,  
The overture lightly sounding, the strain anticipating,  
The welcome nearness, the sight of the perfect body,  
The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless  
on his back lying and floating,  
The female form approaching, I pensive, love-  
flesh tremulous, aching,  
The divine list for myself or you or for any one making,  
The face, the limbs, the index from head to foot, and  
what it arouses,  
The mystic deliria, the madness amorous,  
the utter abandonment,  
(Hark close and still what I now whisper to you,  
I love you, O you entirely possess me,  
O that you and I escape from the rest and go utterly off,  
free and lawless,  
Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not  
more lawless than we;)  
The furious storm through me careering,  
I passionately trembling,

The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the  
woman that loves me and whom I love more than my  
life, that oath swearing,  
(O I willingly stake all for you,  
O let me be lost if it must be so!  
O you and I! what is it to us what the rest do or think?  
What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other and  
exhaust each other if it must be so;)  
From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to,  
The general commanding me, commanding all, from  
him permission taking,  
From time the programme hastening (I have loiter'd too  
long as it is),  
From sex, from the warp and from the woof,  
From privacy, from frequent repinings alone,  
From plenty of persons near and yet the right  
person not near,  
From the soft sliding of hands over me and thrusting of  
fingers through my hair and beard,  
From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom,  
From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk,  
fainting with excess,  
From what the divine husband knows, from the  
work of fatherhood,  
From exultation, victory, and relief, from the bedfellow's  
embrace in the night,  
From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips, and bosoms,  
From the cling of the trembling arm,  
From the bending curve and the clinch,  
From side by side the pliant coverlet off-throwing,  
From the one so unwilling to have me leave, and me just as  
unwilling to leave,  
(Yet a moment, O tender waiter, and I return),

From the hour of shining stars and drooping dew,  
From the night a moment I emerging flitting out,  
Celebrate you act divine and you children prepared for,  
And you stalwart loins.

## I SING THE BODY ELECTRIC

## 1

I sing the body electric,  
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,  
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,  
And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge  
of the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own  
bodies conceal themselves?  
And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who  
defile the dead?  
And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?  
And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

## 2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the  
body itself balks account,  
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect.

The expression of the face balks account,  
But the expressions of a well-made man appears not only  
in his face,  
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints  
of his hips and wrists,  
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist  
and knees, dress does not hide him,



The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the  
cotton and broadcloth,  
To see him pass conveys as much as the best  
poem, perhaps more,  
You linger to see his back, and the back of his  
neck and shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of  
women, the folds of their dress, their style as we pass  
in the street, the contour of their shape downwards,  
The swimmer naked in the swimming bath, seen as he  
swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies  
with his face up and rolls silently to and fro in the  
heave of the water,  
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-  
boats, the horseman in his saddle,  
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,  
The group of labourers seated at noon-time with their open  
dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,  
The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in the  
garden or sow-yard,  
The young fellow hoeing corn, the sleigh-driver driving  
his six horses through the crowd,  
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite  
grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on the  
vacant lot at sun-down after work,  
The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of  
love and resistance,  
The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumpled over and  
blinding the eyes;  
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of  
masculine muscle through clean-setting  
trousers and waist-straps,

The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell  
strikes suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,  
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the  
curv'd neck and the counting;  
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the  
mother's breast with the little child,  
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in  
line with the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

## 3

I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,  
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the  
fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigour, calmness,  
beauty of person,  
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his hair  
and beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black  
eyes, the richness and breadth of his manners,  
These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,  
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his sons  
were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome,  
They and his daughters loved him, all who saw  
him loved him,  
They did not love him by allowance, they loved him  
with personal love,  
He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet through  
the clear-brown skin of his face,  
He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat him-  
self, he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-  
joiner, he had fowling-pieces presented to him by men  
that loved him,

When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to  
hunt or fish, you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous of the gang,  
You would wish long and long to be with him, you would  
wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might  
touch each other.

## 4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,  
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,  
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough,  
To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm ever  
so lightly round his or her neck for a moment, what  
is this then?  
I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women and  
looking on them, and in the contact and odour of them,  
that pleases the soul well,  
All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

## 5

This is the female form,  
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,  
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,  
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapour, all falls aside but myself and it,  
Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, and  
what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell,  
are now consumed,  
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the  
response likewise ungovernable,

Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands a  
diffused, mine too diffused,  
Ebb stung by the flow and flow stung by the ebb, love-fles  
swelling and deliciously aching,  
Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quiverin  
jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice,  
Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly int  
the prostrate dawn,  
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,  
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, man  
born of woman,  
This the bath of birth, this the merge of small and larg  
and the outlet again.

Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the res  
and is the exit of the rest,  
You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates  
of the soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,  
She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,  
She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and activ  
She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons :  
well as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,  
As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible  
completeness, sanity, beauty,  
See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, th  
Female I see.

## 6

The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,  
He too is all qualities, he is action and power,  
The flush of the known universe is in him,  
Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance  
become him well,

The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow  
that is utmost become him well, pride is for him,  
The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent  
to the soul,

Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings  
everything to the test of himself,  
Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail, he  
strikes soundings at last only here,  
(Where else does he strike soundings except here?)

The man's body is sacred, and the woman's body is sacred,  
No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in  
the labourer's gang?

Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed  
on the wharf?

Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off,  
just as much as you,

Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession,  
The universe is a procession with measured  
and perfect motion.)

Do you know so much yourself that you call  
the meanest ignorant?

Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or  
she has no right to a sight?

Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse  
float, and the soil is on the surface, and water runs  
and vegetation sprouts  
For you only, and not for him and her?

## 7

A man's body at auction,  
(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and  
watch the sale),  
I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half  
know his business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,  
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high  
enough for it,  
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without  
one animal or plant,  
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,  
In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning  
in tendon and nerve,  
They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite sense, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,  
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh  
not flabby, good-sized arms and legs,  
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,  
The same old blood! the same red-running blood!  
There swells and jets a heart, there all passions,  
desires, reachings, aspirations,

(Do you think they are not there because they are not  
express'd in parlours and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall  
be fathers in their turns,  
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,  
Of him countless immortal lives with countless  
embodiments and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his  
offspring through the centuries?  
(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you  
could trace back through the centuries?)

## 8

A woman's body at auction,  
She too is not only herself, she is the teeming  
mother of mothers,  
She is the bearer of them that shall grow to be mates  
to the mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?  
Have you ever loved the body of a man?  
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in all  
nations and times all over the earth?

If anything is sacred the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token  
of manhood untainted,  
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body is  
more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body?  
or the fool that corrupted her own live body?

For they do not conceal themselves, and  
cannot conceal themselves.

## 9

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men  
and women, nor the likes of the parts of you,  
I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes  
of the soul (and that they are the soul),  
I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems,  
and that they are my poems,  
Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's,  
mother's, father's, young man's,  
young woman's poems,  
Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,  
Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eyebrows, and the waking  
or sleeping of the lids,  
Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws,  
and the jaw-hinges,  
Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,  
Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of  
the neck, neck-slue,  
Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders,  
and the ample side-round of the chest,  
Upper-arms, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm,  
arm-sinews, arm-bones,  
Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, fore-  
finger, finger-joints, finger-nails,  
Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast,  
breast-bone, breast-side,  
Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,  
Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward  
round, man-balls, man-root,  
Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,



Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,  
Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;  
All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my  
    or your body or of any one's body, male or female,  
The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels  
    sweet and clean,  
The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,  
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-  
    valves, sexuality, maternity,  
Womanhood, and all that is a woman, and the man that  
    comes from woman,  
The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter,  
    weeping, love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,  
The voice, articulation, language,  
    whispering, shouting aloud,  
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat,  
    sleep walking, swimming,  
Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing,  
    arm-curving and tightening,  
The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and  
    around the eyes,  
The skin, the sunburnt shade, freckles, hair,  
The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the  
    hand the naked meat of the body,  
The circling rivers the breath, and breathing it in and out,  
The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence  
    downward toward the knees,  
The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and  
    the marrow in the bones,  
The exquisite realisation of health;  
O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only,  
    but of the soul,  
O I say now these are the soul!

## A WOMAN WAITS FOR ME

A woman waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,  
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture  
of the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,  
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,  
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery,  
the seminal milk,  
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves,  
beauties, delights of the earth,  
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons  
of the earth,  
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and  
justifications of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,  
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,  
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those  
women that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,  
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,  
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,  
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns  
and blowing winds,  
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,

They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run,  
strike, retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,  
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear,  
well possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,  
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,  
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own  
sake, but for others' sakes,  
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,  
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,  
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,  
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,  
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these  
States, I press with slow rude muscle,  
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,  
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long  
accumulated within me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,  
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,  
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of  
me and America,  
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic  
girls, new artists, musicians, and singers,  
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,  
I shall demand perfect men and women out  
of my love-spending,  
I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and  
you interpenetrate now,

I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them,  
as I count on the fruits of the gushing showers  
I give now,  
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death, im-  
mortality, I plant so lovingly now.

## SPONTANEOUS ME

Spontaneous me, Nature,  
The loving day, the mounting sun, the friend I  
am happy with,  
The arm of my friend's hanging idly over my shoulder,  
The hillside whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,  
The same late in autumn, the hues of red, yellow, drab,  
purple, and light and dark green,  
The rich coverlet of the grass, animals, and birds, the pri-  
vate untrimm'd bank, the primitive  
apples, the pebble-stones,  
Beautiful dripping fragments, the negligent list of one after  
another as I happen to call them to me or think of them,  
The real poems (what we call poems  
being merely pictures),  
The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,  
This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry,  
and that all men carry,  
(Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men  
like me, are our lusty lurking masculine poems),  
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odour, love-yielding, love-  
climbers, and the climbing sap,  
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love,  
breasts of love, bellies press'd and glued  
together with love,  
Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love,

The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the  
body of the man, the body of the earth,  
Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,  
The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and  
down, that gripes the full-grown lady-flower, curves  
upon her with amorous firm legs, takes his will of her,  
and holds himself tremulous and tight till  
he is satisfied;  
The wet of woods through the early hours,  
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep,  
one with an arm slanting down across and below the  
waist of the other,  
The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-  
plant, mint, birch-bark,  
The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to  
me what he was dreaming,  
The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl and falling still and  
content to the ground,  
The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects,  
sting me with,  
The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever  
can any one,  
The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only privi-  
leged feelers may be intimate where they are,  
The curious roamer the hand roaming all over the body,  
the bashful withdrawing of flesh where the fingers  
soothingly pause and edge themselves,  
The limpid liquid within the young man,  
The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painful,  
The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest,  
The like of the same I feel, the like of the same in others,  
The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young  
woman that flushes and flushes,

The young man that wakes deep at night, the hot hand  
seeking to repress what would master him,  
The mystic amorous night, the strange half-welcome  
pangs, visions, sweats,  
The pulse pounding through palms and trembling en-  
circling fingers, the young man all colour'd,  
red, ashamed, angry;  
The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie  
willing and naked,  
The merriment of the twin babes that crawl over the grass  
in the sun, the mother never turning her vigilant  
eyes from them,  
The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or  
ripen'd long-round walnuts,  
The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,  
The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find my-  
self indecent, while birds and animals never once  
skulk or find themselves indecent,  
The great chastity of paternity, to match the great  
chastity of maternity,  
The oath of procreation I have sworn, my Adamic  
and fresh daughters,  
The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw,  
till I saturate what shall produce boys to fill my place  
when I am through,  
The wholesome relief, repose, content,  
And this bunch pluck'd at random from myself,  
It has done its work—I toss it carelessly to fall  
where it may.

ONE HOUR TO MADNESS AND JOY

One hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!  
(What is this that frees me so in storms?)

What do my shouts amid lightnings and  
raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!  
O savage and tender achings! (I bequeath them to  
you my children,  
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be  
yielded to me in defiance of the world!  
O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine!  
O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the  
lips of a determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark pool,  
all untied and illumin'd!  
O to speed where there is space enough and air  
enough at last!  
To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I from  
mine and you from yours!  
To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the  
best of Nature!  
To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!  
To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient  
as I am.

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!  
To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!  
To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!  
To court destruction with taunts, with invitations!  
To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love  
indicated to me!

To rise thither with my inebriate soul!  
To be lost if it must be so!  
To feed the remainder of life with one hour of  
    fulness and freedom!  
With one brief hour of madness and joy.

OUT OF THE ROLLING OCEAN THE CROWD  
Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop  
    gently to me,  
Whispering, *I love you, before long I die,*  
*I have travell'd a long way merely to look on you*  
    *to touch you,*  
*For I could not die till I once look'd on you,*  
*For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.*

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,  
Return in peace to the ocean my love,  
I too am part of that ocean, my love, we are not  
    so much separated,  
Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!  
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,  
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry  
    us diverse forever;  
Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air,  
    the ocean and the land,  
Every day at sundown for your dear sake, my love.

AGES AND AGES RETURNING AT INTERVALS  
Ages and ages returning at intervals,  
Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,  
Lusty, phallic, with the potent original  
    loins, perfectly sweet,  
I, chanter of Adamic songs,



Through the new garden the West, the great cities calling,  
Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering  
these, offering myself,  
Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,  
Offspring of my loins.

WE TWO, HOW LONG WE WERE FOOL'D  
We two, how long we were fool'd,  
Now transmuted, we swiftly escape as Nature escapes,  
We are Nature, long have we been absent, but  
now we return,  
We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,  
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,  
We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side,  
We browse, we are two among the wild herds  
spontaneous as any,  
We are two fishes swimming in the sea together,  
We are what locust blossoms are, we drop scent around  
lanes mornings and evenings,  
We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables, minerals,  
We are two predatory hawks, we soar above  
and look down,  
We are two resplendent suns, we it is who balance our-  
selves orbic and stellar, we are as two comets,  
We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods, we  
spring on prey,  
We are two clouds forenoons and after-  
noons driving overhead,  
We are seas mingling, we are two of those cheerful waves  
rolling over each other and interwetting each other,  
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent,  
receptive, pervious, impervious,

We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product  
and influence of the globe,  
We have circled and circled till we have arrived home  
again, we two,  
We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

O HYMEN! O HYMENEE!

O hymen! O hymenees! why do you tantalise me thus?  
O why sting me for a swift moment only?  
Why can you not continue? O why do you now cease?  
Is it because if you continued beyond the swift moment  
you would soon certainly kill me?

I AM HE THAT ACHES WITH LOVE

I am he that aches with amorous love;  
Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter, aching,  
attract all matter?  
So the body of me to all I meet or know.

NATIVE MOMENTS

Native moments—when you come upon me—ah, you  
are here now,  
Give me now libidinous joys only,  
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life  
coarse and rank,  
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night, too,  
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the  
midnight orgies of young men,  
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,  
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some  
low person for my dearest friend,  
He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one con-  
demn'd by others for deeds done,

I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself  
from my companions?

O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,  
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,  
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

ONCE I PASS'D THROUGH A POPULOUS CITY

Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain  
for future use with its shows,  
architecture, customs, traditions,

Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me,

Day by day and night by night we were together—all else  
has long been forgotten by me,

I remember, I say, only that woman who passionately  
clung to me,

Again we wander, we love, we separate again,

Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,

I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.

I HEARD YOU SOLEMN-SWEET PIPES  
OF THE ORGAN

I heard you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday  
morn I pass'd the church,

Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard  
your long-stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,

I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I  
heard the soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;

Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through  
one of the wrists around my head,

Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells  
last night under my ear.

## FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES

Facing west from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of ma-  
ternity, the land of migrations, look afar,  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the  
circle almost circled;  
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the  
vales of Kashmere,  
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage,  
and the hero,  
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and  
the spice islands,  
Long having wander'd since, round the  
earth having wander'd,  
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
(But where is what I started for so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

## AS ADAM EARLY IN THE MORNING

As Adam early in the morning,  
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,  
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,  
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body  
as I pass,  
Be not afraid of my body.

## CALAMUS

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### IN PATHS UNTRODDEN

In paths untrodden,  
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,  
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,  
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures,  
profits, conformities,  
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,  
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me  
that my soul,  
That the soul of the man I speak of rejoices in comrades,  
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,  
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,  
No longer abash'd (for in this secluded spot I can respond  
as I would not dare elsewhere),  
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet  
contains all the rest,  
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those  
of manly attachment,  
Projecting them along that substantial life,  
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,  
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my  
forty-first year,  
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,  
To tell the secret of my nights and days,  
To celebrate the need of comrades.

## SCENTED HERBAGE OF MY BREAST

Scented herbage of my breast,  
Leaves from you I gleam, I write, to be  
perused best afterwards,  
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above  
me above death,  
Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze  
you, delicate leaves,  
Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you re-  
tired you shall emerge again;  
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover  
you or inhale your faint odour, but I believe a few will;  
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to  
tell in your own way of the heart that is under you,  
O I do not know what you mean there underneath your-  
selves, you are not happiness,  
You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn  
and sting me,  
Yet you are beautiful to me you faint-tinged roots, you  
make me think of death,  
Death is beautiful from you (what indeed is finally beau-  
tiful except death and love?)  
O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of  
lovers, I think it must be for death,  
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the at-  
mosphere of lovers,  
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul  
declines to prefer,  
(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers  
welcomes death most),  
Indeed, O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely  
the same as you mean,

Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out  
of my breast!

Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!

Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged  
roots' timid leaves!

Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage  
of my breast!

Come, I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of  
mine, I have long enough stifled and choked;

Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you  
serve me not,

I will say what I have to say by itself,

I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again  
utter a call only their call,

I will rise with it immortal reverberations  
through the States,

I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape  
and will through the States,

Through me shall the words be said to  
make death exhilarating,

Give me your tone therefore, O death, that I may  
accord with it,

Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now  
above all, and are folded inseparably together, you  
love and death are,

Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I  
was calling life,

For now it is conveyed to me that you are  
the purports essential,

That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons,  
and that they are mainly for you,

That you beyond them come forth to remain,  
the real reality,

That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no  
matter how long,  
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,  
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire  
show of appearance,  
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last  
so very long,  
But you will last very long.

WHOEVER YOU ARE HOLDING ME NOW IN HAND

Whoever you are holding me now in hand,  
Without one thing all will be useless,  
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,  
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?  
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result  
uncertain, perhaps destructive,  
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect  
to be your sole and exclusive standard,  
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,  
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the  
lives around you would have to be abandon'd,  
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any  
further, let go your hand from my shoulders,  
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,  
Or back of a rock in the open air,  
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not,  
nor in company,



And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or  
unborn, or dead),  
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest  
any person for miles around approach unawares,  
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the  
sea or some quiet island,  
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,  
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the  
new husband's kiss,  
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,  
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest  
upon your hip,  
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;  
For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,  
And thus touching you would I silently sleep and  
be carried eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,  
For these leaves and me you will not understand,  
They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I will  
certainly elude you,  
Even while you should think you had unquestionably  
caught me, behold!  
Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have  
written this book,  
Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,  
Nor do those know me best who admire me and  
vauntingly praise me,

Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very  
few) prove victorious,  
Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much  
evil, perhaps more,  
For all is useless without that which you may guess at many  
times and not hit, that which I hinted at;  
Therefore release me and depart on your way.

FOR YOU, O DEMOCRACY

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
    With the love of comrades,  
    With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along the rivers  
    of America, and along the shores of the great lakes,  
    and all over the prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about  
    each other's necks,  
    By the love of comrades,  
    By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve  
    you, ma femme!  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

THESE I SINGING IN SPRING

These I singing in spring collect for lovers,  
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their  
    sorrow and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)

Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I  
pass the gates,  
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing  
not the wet,  
Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones  
thrown there, picked from the  
fields, have accumulated,  
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the  
stones and partly cover them, beyond these I pass),  
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer, before  
I think where I go,  
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then  
in the silence,  
Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me,  
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace  
my arms or neck,  
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker they  
come, a great crowd, and I in the middle,  
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I  
wander with them,  
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever  
is near me,  
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,  
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-  
oak in Florida as it hung trailing down,  
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,  
And here what I now draw from the water, wading  
in the pond-side,  
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns  
again never to separate from me,  
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades,  
this calamus-root shall,

Interchange it youths with each other! let none  
    render it back!)  
And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild  
    orange and chestnut,  
And stems of currants and plum-blows, and  
    the aromatic cedar,  
These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,  
Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them  
    loosely from me,  
Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving  
    something to each;  
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side,  
    that I reserve,  
I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am  
    capable of loving.

NOT HEAVING FROM MY RIBB'D BREAST ONLY  
Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only,  
Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,  
Not in those long-drawn, ill-supprest sighs,  
Not in many an oath and promise broken,  
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition,  
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,  
Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,  
Not in the curious systole and diastole within which will  
    one day cease,  
Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,  
Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me whea  
    alone far in the wilds,  
Not in husky pantings through clinched teeth,  
Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words,  
    echoes, dead words,  
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,

Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams  
of every day,  
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and  
dismiss you continually—not there,  
Not in any or all of them, O adhesiveness! O pulse  
of my life!  
Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than  
in these songs.

OF THE TERRIBLE DOUBT OF APPEARANCES

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,  
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,  
That may-be reliance and hope are but  
speculations after all,  
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a  
beautiful fable only,  
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men,  
hills shining and flowing waters,  
The skies of day and night, colours, densities, forms, may-  
be these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions,  
and the real something has yet to be known,  
(How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound  
me and mock me!  
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows,  
aught of them),  
May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they  
indeed but seem) as from my present point of view,  
and might prove (as of course they would) nought of  
what they appear, or nought anyhow, from entirely  
changed points of view;  
To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd  
by my lovers, my dear friends,

When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while  
holding me by the hand,  
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words  
and reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,  
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I  
am silent, I require nothing further,  
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of  
identity beyond the grave,  
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,  
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

## THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS

And now, gentlemen,  
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,  
As base and finale too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,  
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek  
and Germanic systems,  
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and  
Schelling and Hegel,  
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,  
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine  
having studied long,  
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek  
and Germanic systems,  
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,  
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ  
the divine I see,  
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of  
friend to friend,

Of the well-married husband and wife, of  
    children and parents,  
Of city for city and land for land.

## RECORDERS AGES HENCE

Recorders ages hence,  
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive  
    exterior, I will tell you what to say of me,  
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of  
    the tenderest lover,  
The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his  
    lover was fondest,  
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless  
    ocean of love within him, and freely pour'd it forth,  
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear  
    friends, his lovers,  
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless  
    and dissatisfied at night,  
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he  
    lov'd might secretly be indifferent to him,  
Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in  
    woods, on hills, he and another wandering hand in  
    hand, they twain apart from other men,  
Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his arm the  
    shoulder of his friend, while the arm of his friend  
    rested upon him also.

## WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had  
    been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was  
    not a happy night for me that follow'd,  
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accom-  
    plish'd, still I was not happy,

But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of  
perfect health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe  
breath of autumn,  
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and dis-  
appear in the morning light,  
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing;  
bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw  
the sun rise,  
And when I thought how my dear friend, my lover, was on  
his way coming, O then I was happy,  
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food  
nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,  
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next eve-  
ning came my friend,  
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll  
slowly continually up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed  
to me whispering to congratulate me,  
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same  
cover in the cool night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was  
inclined toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that night  
I was happy.

ARE YOU THE NEW PERSON DRAWN  
TOWARD ME?

Are you the new person drawn toward me?  
To begin with, take warning, I am surely far different from  
what you suppose;  
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?  
Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?



Do you think the friendship of me would  
    be unalloy'd satisfaction?  
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?  
Do you see no further than this facade, this smooth and  
    tolerant manner of me?  
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward  
    a real heroic man?  
Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may  
    be all maya, illusion?

## ROOTS AND LEAVES THEMSELVES ALONE

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,  
Scents brought to men and women from the wild  
    woods and pond-side,  
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around  
    tighter than vines,  
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees  
    as the sun is risen,  
Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on  
    the living sea, to you O sailors!  
Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh  
    to young persons wandering out in the fields when  
    the winter breaks up,  
Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,  
Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,  
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open  
    and bring form, colour, perfume, to you,  
If you become the aliment and the wet they will become  
    flowers, fruits, tall branches, and trees.

## NOT HEAT FLAMES UP AND CONSUMES

Not heat flames up and consumes,  
Not sea-waves hurry in and out,

Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer, bears  
    lightly along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,  
Wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;  
Not these, O none of these more than the flames of me,  
    consuming, burning for his love whom I love,  
O none more than I hurrying in and out;  
Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up?  
    O I the same,  
O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting  
    clouds, are borne through the open air,  
Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,  
Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you.

## TRICKLE DROPS

Trickle drops! my blue veins leaving!  
O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,  
Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,  
From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,  
From my face, from my forehead and lips,  
From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd, press  
    forth red drops, confession drops,  
Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I  
    say, bloody drops,  
Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,  
Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,  
Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding drops,  
Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

## CITY OF ORGIES

City of orgies, walks, and joys,  
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will  
    one day make you illustrious,

Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaux, your  
spectacles, repay me,  
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships  
at the wharves,  
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows  
with goods in them,  
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in  
the soiree or feast;  
Not those, but as I pass, O Manhattan, your frequent and  
swift flash of eyes offering me love,  
Offering response to my own—these repay me,  
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

#### BEHOLD THIS SWARTHY FACE

Behold this swarthy face, these grey eyes,  
This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,  
My brown hands and the silent manner of  
me without charm;  
Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses  
me lightly on the lips with robust love,  
And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck  
• give a kiss in return,  
We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,  
We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

#### I SAW IN LOUISIANA A LIVE-OAK GROWING

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
All alone stood it and the moss hung down  
from the branches,  
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous  
leaves of dark green,  
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me  
think of myself,

But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves stand-  
ing alone there without its friend near, for I knew  
I could not,  
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon  
it, and twined around it a little moss,  
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight  
in my room,  
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,  
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them),  
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think  
of manly love;  
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in  
Louisiana solitary in a wide flat space,  
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend  
a lover near,  
I know very well I could not.

## TO A STRANGER

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I  
look upon you,  
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking (it  
comes to me as of a dream),  
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,  
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid,  
affectionate, chaste, matured,  
You grew up with me, were a boy with men or a  
girl with me,  
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become  
not yours only nor left my body mine only,  
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we  
pass, you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,  
I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit  
alone or wake at night alone,

I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,  
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

THIS MOMENT YEARNING AND THOUGHTFUL  
This moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,  
It seems to me there are other men in other lands  
    yearning and thoughtful,  
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Ger-  
    many, Italy, France, Spain,  
Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia, or Japan,  
    talking other dialects,  
And it seems to me if I could know those men I should  
    become attached to them as I do to men in  
    my own lands,  
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,  
I know I should be happy with them.

I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME  
I hear it was charged against me that I sought  
    to destroy institutions,  
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,  
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with  
    the destruction of them?)  
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city  
    of these States inland and seaboard,  
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or  
    large that dents the water,  
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,  
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

THE PRAIRIE-GRASS DIVIDING  
The prairie-grass dividing, its special odour breathing,  
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,

Demand the most copious and close  
    companionship of men,  
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,  
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse,  
    sunlit, fresh, nutritious,  
Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom  
    and command, leading not following,  
Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and  
    lusty flesh clear of taint,  
Those that look carelessly in the faces of presidents and  
    governors, as to say, *Who are you?*  
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never  
    constrain'd, never obedient,  
Those of inland America.

WHEN I PERUSE THE CONQUER'D FAME  
When I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the vic-  
    tories of mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,  
Nor the President in his presidency, nor the rich in  
    his great house,  
But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it  
    was with them,  
How together through life, through dangers, odium, un-  
    changing, long and long,  
Through youth and through middle and old age, how un-  
    faltering, how affectionate and faithful they were,  
Then I am pensive—I hastily walk away fill'd with  
    the bitterest envy.

WE TWO BOYS TOGETHER CLINGING  
We two boys together clinging,  
One the other never leaving,

Up and down the roads going, North and  
    South excursions making,  
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,  
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,  
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing,  
    soldiering, thieving, threatening,  
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water  
    drinking, on the turf of the sea-beach dancing,  
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes  
    mocking, feebleness chasing,  
Fulfilling our foray.

#### A PROMISE TO CALIFORNIA

A promise to California,  
Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget  
    Sound and Oregon;  
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you,  
    to remain, to teach robust American love,  
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among  
    you, inland, and along the Western sea;  
For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea,  
    and I will also.

#### HERE THE FRAILEST LEAVES OF ME

Here the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,  
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do  
    not expose them,  
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

#### NO LABOUR-SAVING MACHINE

No labour-saving machine,  
Nor discovery have I made,

Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest  
to found a hospital or library,  
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,  
Nor literary success nor intellect, nor book for  
the book-shelf,  
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,  
For comrades and lovers.

#### A GLIMPSE

A glimpse though an interstice caught,  
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around  
the stove late of a winter night, and I unremark'd  
seated in a corner,  
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently ap-  
proaching and seating himself near, that he may hold  
me by the hand,  
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of  
drinking and oath and smutty jest,  
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking  
little, perhaps not a word.

#### A LEAF FOR HAND IN HAND

A leaf for hand in hand;  
You natural persons old and young!  
You on the Mississippi and on all the branches and bayous  
of the Mississippi!  
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!  
You twain! and all processions moving along the streets!  
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for  
you to walk hand in hand

#### EARTH, MY LIKENESS

Earth, my likeness,  
Though you look so impassive, ample, and spheric there,



I now suspect that is not all;  
I now suspect there is something fierce in you eligible  
to burst forth,  
For an athlete is enamour'd of me, and I of him,  
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in  
me eligible to burst forth,  
I dare not tell it in words, not even in these songs.

I DREAM'D IN A DREAM

I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks  
of the whole of the rest of the earth,  
I dreamed that was the new city of Friends,  
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love,  
it led the rest,  
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men  
of that city,  
And in all their looks and words.

WHAT THINK YOU I TAKE MY PEN IN HAND?

What think you I take my pen in hand to record?  
The battle-ship, perfect-modell'd, majestic, that I saw pass  
the offing to-day under full sail?  
The splendours of the past day? or the splendour of the  
night that envelops me?  
Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread  
around me?—no;  
But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in  
the midst of the crowd, parting the parting  
of dear friends,  
The one to remain hung on the other's neck and  
passionately kiss'd him,  
While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain  
in his arms.

## TO THE EAST AND TO THE WEST

To the East and to the West,  
To the man of the Seaside State and of Pennsylvania,  
To the Kanadian of the north, to the Southerner I love,  
These with perfect trust to depict you as myself, the germs  
are in all men,  
I believe the main purport of these States is to found a  
superb friendship, exalté, previously unknown,  
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting,  
latent in all men.

## SOMETIMES WITH ONE I LOVE

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear  
I effuse unreturn'd love,  
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is cer-  
tain one way or another,  
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love  
was not return'd,  
Yet out of that I have written these songs).

## TO A WESTERN BOY

Many things to absorb I teach to help you become  
eleve of mine;  
Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,  
If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not  
silently select lovers,  
Of what use is it that you seek to become eleve of mine?"

## FAST-ANCHOR'D ETERNAL O LOVE!

Fast-anchor'd eternal O love! O woman I love!  
O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the  
thoughts of you!

Then separate, as disembodied or another born,  
Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,  
I ascend, I float in the regions of your love, O man,  
O sharer of my roving life.

## AMONG THE MULTITUDE

Among the men and women the multitude,  
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,  
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband,  
    brother, child, any nearer than I am,  
Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one knows me.

Ah, lover, and perfect equal,  
I meant that you should discover me so  
    by faint indirections,  
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the  
    like in you.

O YOU WHOM I OFTEN AND SILENTLY COME  
O you whom I often and silently come where you are that  
    I may be with you,  
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same  
    room with you,  
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake  
    is playing within me.

## THAT SHADOW MY LIKENESS

That shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a  
    livelihood, chattering, chaffering,  
How often I find myself standing and looking at it  
    where it flits,

How often I question and doubt whether that  
    is really me;  
But among my lovers and carolling these songs,  
Or I never doubt whether that is really me.

FULL OF LIFE NOW

Full of life now, compact, visible,  
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,  
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,  
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible  
    am become invisible,  
Now it is you, compact, visible, realising my  
    poems, seeking me,  
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and  
    become your comrade;  
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am  
    now with you.)

## SALUT AU MONDE!

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### 1

O take my hand, Walt Whitman!  
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!  
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,  
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you, Walt Whitman?  
What waves and soils exuding?  
What climes? what persons and cities are here?  
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?  
Who are the girls? who are the married women?  
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their  
    arms about each other's necks?  
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?  
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the mists?  
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers?

### 2

Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,  
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is provided  
    for in the west,  
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,  
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends,  
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting  
    rings, it does not set for months,  
Stretched in due time within me the midnight sun just rises  
    above the horizon and sinks again,

Within me zones, seas, cataracts, forests, volcanoes, groups,  
Malaysia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

## 3

What do you hear, Walt Whitman?

I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife singing,  
I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of animals early in the day,  
I hear emulous shouts of Australians pursuing  
the wild horse,  
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut  
shade, to the rebeck and guitar,  
I hear continual echoes from the Thames,  
I hear fierce French liberty songs,  
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative  
of old poems,  
I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and grass  
with the showers of their terrible clouds,  
I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively falling  
on the breast of the black venerable vast  
mother the Nile,  
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells  
of the mule,  
I hear the Arab muezzin calling from the top  
of the mosque,  
I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their churches,  
I hear the responsive base and soprano,  
I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice putting  
to sea at Okotsk,  
I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffe as the slaves march on,  
as the husky gangs pass on by twos and threes,  
fasten'd together with wrist-chains and ankle-chains,

I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,  
I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong  
legends of the Romans,  
I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the  
beautiful God the Christ,  
I hear the Hindoo teaching his favourite pupil the loves,  
wars, adages, transmitted safely to this day from poets  
who wrote three thousand years ago.

## 4

What do you see, Walt Whitman?  
Who are they you salute, and that one after  
another salute you?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,  
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails, fac-  
tories, palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of  
nomads upon the surface,  
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are  
sleeping, and the sunlit part on the other side,  
I see the curious rapid change of light and shade,  
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of  
them as my land is to me.

I see plenteous waters,  
I see mountain peaks, I see the sierras of Andes  
where they range,  
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays, Ghauts,  
I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz, Kazbek, Bazardjusi,  
I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps,  
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians, and to the north the  
Dofrafields, and off at sea Mount Hecla,  
I see Vesuvius and Etna, the Mountains of the Moon, and  
the Red Mountains of Madagascar,

I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts,  
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,  
I see the superior oceans and the inferior ones, the Atlantic  
and Pacific, the Sea of Mexico, the Brazilian Sea, and  
the Sea of Peru,  
The waters of Hindustan, the China Sea, and the  
Gulf of Guinea,  
The Japan waters, the beautiful bay of Nagasaki, land-  
lock'd in its mountains,  
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British  
shores, and the Bay of Biscay,  
The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to another  
of its islands,  
The White Sea, and the sea around Greenland.

I behold the mariners of the world,  
Some are in storms, some in the night with the watch  
on the lookout,  
Some drifting helplessly, some with contagious diseases.

I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in  
clusters in port, some on their voyages,  
Some double the Cape of Storms, some Cape Verde, others  
Capes Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore,  
Others Dondra Head, others pass the Straits of Sunda,  
others Cape Lopatka, others Behring's Straits,  
Others Cape Horn, others sail the Gulf of Mexico or along  
Cuba or Hayti, others Hudson's Bay or Baffin's Bay,  
Others pass the Straits of Dover, others enter the Wash,  
others the Firth of Solway, others round Cape Clear,  
others the Land's End,  
Others traverse the Zuyder Zee or the Scheld,



Others as comers and goers at Gibraltar  
or the Dardanelles,  
Others sternly push their way through the  
northern winter packs,  
Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena,  
Others the Niger or the Congo, others the Indus, the  
Burampooter and Cambodia,  
Others wait steam'd up ready to start in the  
ports of Australia,  
Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon,  
Naples, Hamburg, Bremen, Bordeaux,  
the Hague, Copenhagen,  
Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama.

## 5

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,  
I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,  
I see them in Asia and in Africa.

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,  
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses,  
gains, passions, of my race.

I see the long river-stripes of the earth,  
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,  
I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the Yellow  
River, the Yiang-tse, and the Pearl.  
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube, the  
Loire, the Rhone, and the Guadalquiver flow,  
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,  
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian  
along the Po,  
I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina Bay.

## 6

I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and that of India,  
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.  
I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars in human forms,  
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth, oracles, sacrifices, brahmins, sabians, llamas, monks, muftis, exhorters,  
I see where druids walk'd the groves of Mona, I see the mistletoe and vervain,  
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of gods, I see the old signifiers,  
I see Christ eating the bread of His last supper in the midst of youths and old persons,  
I see where the strong divine young man the Hercules toil'd faithfully and long and then died,  
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd Bacchus,  
I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown of feathers on his head,  
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-belov'd, saying to the people, *Do not weep for me,*  
*This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my true country, I now go back there,*  
*I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his turn.*

## 7

I see the battle-fields of the earth, grass grows upon them and blossoms and corn,  
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.

I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the  
unknown events, heroes, records of the earth.

I see the places of the sagas,  
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,  
I see granite boulders and cliffs, I see green  
meadows and lakes,  
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors,  
I see them raised high with stones by the marge of restless  
oceans, that the dead men's spirits when they wearied  
of their quiet graves might rise up through the mounds  
and gaze on the tossing billows, and be refresh'd by  
storms, immensity, liberty, action.

I see the steppes of Asia,  
I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of  
Kalmucks and Baskirs,  
I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,  
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines, I see the  
jungles and deserts,  
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tail'd  
sheep, the antelope, and the burrowing wolf.

I see the highlands of Abyssinia,  
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-  
tree, tamarind, date,  
And see fields of teff-wheat and places of verdure and gold.

I see the Brazilian vaquero,  
I see the Bolivian ascending Mount Sorata,  
I see the Wacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable  
rider of horses with his lasso on his arm,  
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle  
for their hides.

## 8

I see the regions of snow and ice,  
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn,  
I see the seal-seeker in his boat poising his lance,  
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge drawn by dogs,  
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the  
    South Pacific and the North Atlantic,  
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland—  
    I mark the long winters and the isolation.

## 9

I see the cities of the earth and make myself at random a  
    part of them,  
I am a real Parisian,  
I am a habitan of Vienna,  
    St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople,  
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,  
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,  
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brus-  
    sels, Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,  
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward in  
    Christiania or Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in  
    some street in Iceland,  
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

## 10

I see vapours exhaling from unexplored countries,  
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd  
    splint, the fetich, and the obi.  
  
I see African and Asiatic towns,  
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne,  
    Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Monrovia,

I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares,  
Delhi, Calcutta, Tokio,  
I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashan-  
teeman in their huts,  
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo,  
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva and  
those of Herat,  
I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina, and the interven-  
ing sands, I see the caravans toiling onward,  
I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the  
pyramids and obelisks,  
I look on chisell'd histories, records of conquering kings,  
dynasties, cut in slabs of sand-stone, or  
on granite-blocks,  
I see at Memphis mummy-pits containing mummies em-  
balm'd, swathed in linen cloth, lying  
there many centuries,  
I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the side-  
drooping neck, the hands folded across the breast.

I see all the menials of the earth, labouring,  
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,

I see the defective human bodies of the earth,  
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,  
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers  
of the earth,  
The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere,  
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophers,  
I see the constructiveness of my race,

I see the results of the perseverance and industry  
of my race,  
I see ranks, colours, barbarisms, civilisations, I go among  
them, I mix indiscriminately,  
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

## 11

You whoever you are!  
You daughter or son of England!  
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you  
Russ in Russia!  
You dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large,  
fine-headed, nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on equal  
terms with me!  
You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Icelander! you Prussian!  
You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!  
You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!  
You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands! (you  
stock whence I myself have descended);  
You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian!  
farmer of Styria!  
You neighbour of the Danube!  
You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser!  
you working-woman too!  
You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian! Saxon! Wal-  
lachian! Bulgarian!  
You Roman! Neapolitan! you Greek!  
You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!  
You mountaineer living lawlessly on the  
Taurus or Caucasus!  
You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares  
and stallions feeding!

You beautiful-bodied Persian at full speed in the saddle  
shooting arrows to the mark!  
You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you  
Tartar of Tartary!  
You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks!  
You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk to  
stand once on Syrian ground!  
You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!  
You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream of the  
Euphrates! you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh!  
you ascending Mount Ararat!  
You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of  
the minarets of Mecca!  
You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-mandeb  
ruling your families and tribes!  
You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Nazareth,  
Damascus, or Lake Tiberias!  
You Thibet trader on the wide inland or bargaining in the  
shops of Lassa!  
You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar,  
Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo!  
All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, in-  
different of place!  
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes  
of the sea!  
And you of centuries hence when you listen to me!  
And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but  
include just the same!  
Health to you! good will to you all, from me  
and America sent!  
Each of us inevitable,  
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right  
upon the earth,

Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,  
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

## 12

You Hottentot with clicking palate! you  
woolly-hair'd hordes!  
You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!  
You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive  
countenances of brutes!  
You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look  
down upon for all your glimmering  
language and spirituality!  
You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!  
You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip,  
groveling, seeking your food!  
You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!  
You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee!  
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!  
You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you  
Patagonian! you Feejeeman!  
I do not prefer others so very much before you either,  
I do not say one word against you, away back there  
where you stand,  
(You will come forward in due time to my side).

## 13

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination  
around the whole earth,  
I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready  
for me in all lands,  
I think some divine rapport has equalised me with them.



You vapours, I think I have risen with you, moved away  
to distant continents, and fallen down  
there, for reasons,  
I think I have blown with you you winds;  
You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,  
I have run through what any river or strait of the globe  
has run through,  
I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas and on  
the high embedded rocks, to cry thence:

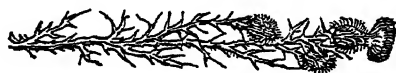
*Salut au monde!*

What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate  
those cities myself,  
All islands to which birds wing their way I wing  
my way myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,  
I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,  
To remain after me in sight for ever,  
For all the haunts and homes of men.

# SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD

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## 1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself  
    am good-fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no  
    more, need nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints,  
    libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me  
    wherever I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,  
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

## 2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are  
    not all that is here,  
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor  
preference nor denial,  
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the  
illiterate person, are not denied;  
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's  
tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing  
party of mechanics,  
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop,  
the eloping couple,  
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture  
into the town, the return back from the town,  
They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none  
can be interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

## 3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!  
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and  
give them shape!  
You light that wraps me and all things in  
delicate equable showers!  
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!  
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are  
so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs  
at the edges!  
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-  
lined sides! you distant ships!  
You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd  
facades! you roofs!  
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!

You windows whose transparent shells might  
    expose so much!  
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!  
You grey stones of interminable pavements!  
    you trodden crossings!  
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted  
    to yourselves, and now would impart the same  
    secretly to me,  
From the living and the dead you have peopled your im-  
    passive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be  
    evident and amicable with me.

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,  
The picture alive, every part in its best light,  
The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping  
    where it is not wanted,  
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh senti-  
    ment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me, *Do not leave me?*  
Do you say, *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?*  
Do you say, *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and*  
    *undenied, adhere to me?*

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you,  
    yet I love you,  
You express me better than I can express myself,  
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and  
    all free poems also,  
I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,

I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and  
    whoever beholds me shall like me,  
I think whoever I see must be happy.

## 5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits  
    and imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the  
    holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the  
    south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,  
I can repeat over to men and women, You have done such  
    good to me I would do the same to you,  
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,  
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and  
    shall bless me.

## 6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would  
    not amaze me,

Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it  
would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep  
with the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole  
race of men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and  
mocks all authority and all argument against it).

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another  
not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is  
its own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities  
and is content,  
Is the certainty of reality and immortality of things, and  
the excellence of things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that  
provokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all  
under the spacious clouds and along the landscape  
and flowing currents.

Here is realisation,  
Here is a man tallied—he realises here what he  
has in him,

The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of  
you, you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?  
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for  
you and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd,  
it is apropos;  
Do you know what it is as you pass to be  
loved by strangers?  
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

## 7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
The efflux of the soul comes from within through em-  
bower'd gates, ever provoking questions,  
These yearnings why are they; these thoughts in the dark-  
ness why are they?  
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh  
me the sunlight expands my blood?  
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink  
flat and lank?  
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and  
melodious thoughts descend upon me?  
(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees  
and always drop fruit as I pass);  
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?  
What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?  
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore  
as I walk by and pause?  
What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-  
will? what gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,  
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,  
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and  
sweetness of man and woman,  
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter  
every day out of the roots of themselves, than it  
sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself),  
Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat  
of the love of young and old,  
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks  
beauty and attainments,  
Toward it heaves the shuddering, longing ache of contact.

9

Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!  
Travelling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,  
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature  
is rude and incomprehensible at first,  
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine  
things well envelop'd,  
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than  
words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,  
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient  
this dwelling we cannot remain here,



However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters  
we must not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are  
permitted to receive it but a little while.

## 10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,  
We will sail pathless and wild seas,  
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee  
clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,  
Health, defiance, gaiety, self-esteem, curiosity;  
Allons! from all formules!  
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial  
waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!  
He travelling with me needs the best  
blood, thews, endurance,  
None may come to the trial till he or she bring  
courage and health,  
Come not here if you have already spent the  
best of yourself,  
Only those may come who come in sweet  
and determin'd bodies,  
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is  
permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,  
We convince by our presence.)

## 11

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer  
    rough new prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you  
    earn or achieve,  
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you  
    hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are  
    call'd by an irresistible call to depart,  
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of  
    those who remain behind you,  
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer  
    with passionate kisses of parting,  
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their  
    reach'd hands toward you.

## 12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!  
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic  
    men—they are the greatest women,  
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,  
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,  
Habitué of many distant countries, habitués of  
    far-distant dwellings,  
Trusters of men and women, observers of  
    cities, solitary toilers,  
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells  
    of the shore,  
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender  
    helpers of children, bearers of children,

Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-  
down of coffins,  
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the  
curious years each emerging from that  
which preceded it,  
Journeyers as with companions, namely their  
own diverse phases,  
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealised baby-days,  
Journeyers gaily with their own youth, journeyers with  
their bearded and well-grain'd manhood,  
Journeyers with their womanhood,  
ample, unsurpass'd, content,  
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of  
manhood or womanhood,  
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth  
of the universe,  
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by  
freedom of death.

## 13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,  
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,  
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and  
nights they tend to,  
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,  
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it  
and pass it,  
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may  
reach it and pass it,  
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for  
you, however long but it stretches and waits for you,  
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,

To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all  
without labour or purchase, abstracting the feast yet  
not abstracting one particle of it,  
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's  
elegant villa, and the chaste blessings of the well-  
married couple, and the fruits of orchards and  
flowers of gardens,  
To take to your use out of the compact cities as  
you pass through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward  
wherever you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you en-  
counter them, to gather the love out of their hearts,  
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you  
leave them behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as  
roads for travelling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that  
was or is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls  
into niches and corners before the procession of souls  
along the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the  
grand roads of the universe, all other progress is the  
needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad,  
turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,  
Desperate, proud, sick, accepted by men,  
rejected by men,

They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not  
where they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best—  
toward something great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or  
woman come forth!  
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house,  
though you built it, or though it has been built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!  
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,  
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping of people,  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd  
and trimm'd faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to  
hear the confession,  
Another self, a duplicate of every one, sulking and,  
hiding it goes,  
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities,  
polite and bland in the parlours,  
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in  
the public assembly,  
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in  
the bed-room, everywhere,  
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death  
under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,  
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons  
and artificial flowers,

Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a  
    syllable of itself,  
Speaking of anything else but never of itself.

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!  
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?  
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?  
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of  
    things that from any fruition of success, no matter  
    what, shall come forth something to make a  
    greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,  
He going with me must go well arm'd,  
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty,  
    angry enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!  
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—  
    be not detain'd!  
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book  
    on the shelf unopen'd!  
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the  
    money remain unearn'd!  
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead  
    in the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

# CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

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## 1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you  
also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes,  
how curious you are to me!  
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross,  
returning home, are more curious to me  
than you suppose,  
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence  
are more to me, and more in my meditations, than  
you might suppose.

## 2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all  
hours of the day,  
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disinte-  
grated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,  
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,  
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and  
hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage  
over the river,  
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with  
me far away,  
The others that are to follow me, the ties between  
me and them,



The certainty of others, the life, love, sight,  
hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from  
shore to shore,

Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,

Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west,  
and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,

Others will see the islands large and small;

Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the  
sun half an hour high,

A hundred years hence, or even so many hundred years  
hence, others will see them,

Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the  
falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

## 3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avail not,

I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or  
ever so many generations hence,

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,  
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one  
of a crowd,

Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and  
the bright flow, I was refresh'd,

Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the  
swift current, I stood yet was hurried,

Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships, and the  
thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,  
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in  
the air floating with motionless wings,  
oscillating their bodies,

Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies  
and left the rest in strong shadow,  
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging  
toward the south,  
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,  
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the  
shape of my head in the sunlit water,  
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward  
and south-westward,  
Look'd on the vapour as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,  
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,  
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,  
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the  
ships at anchor,  
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,  
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the  
slender serpentine pennants,  
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots  
in their pilot-houses,  
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous  
whirl of the wheels,  
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups,  
the frolicsome crests and glistening,  
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the grey  
walls of the granite storehouses by the docks,  
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely  
flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat,  
the belated lighter,  
On the neighbouring shore the fires from the foundry chim-  
neys burning high and glaringly into the night,

Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and  
yellow light over the tops of houses, and down into  
the clefts of streets.

## 4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,  
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately  
and rapid river,  
The men and women I saw were all near to me,  
Others the same—others who look back on me because I  
look'd forward to them,  
(The time will come, though I stop here  
to-day and to-night).

## 5

What is it then between us?  
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of  
years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and  
place avails not,  
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,  
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan Island, and bathed  
in the waters around it,  
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,  
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they  
came upon me,  
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they  
came upon me,  
I too had been struck from the float for ever  
held in solution,  
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,

That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I  
knew I should be of my body.

## 6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,  
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,  
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,  
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they  
not in reality meagre?  
Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,  
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,  
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,  
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,  
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,  
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow,  
sly, cowardly, malignant,  
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,  
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous  
wish, not wanting,  
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none  
of these wanting,  
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,  
Was called by my highest name by clear loud voices of  
young men as they saw me approaching or passing,  
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent  
leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,  
Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public as-  
sembly, yet never told them a word,  
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old  
laughing, gnawing, sleeping,  
Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,

The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as  
great as we like,  
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

## 7

Closer yet I approach you,  
What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—  
I laid in my stores in advance,  
I consider'd long and seriously of you before  
you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?  
Who knows but I am enjoying this?  
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as look-  
ing at you now, for all you cannot see me?

## 8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me  
than mast-hemm'd Manhattan?  
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?  
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the  
twilight, and the belated lighter?  
What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and  
with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by  
my nighest name as I approach?  
What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman  
or man that looks in my face?  
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my  
meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?  
What I promis'd without mentioning it, have  
you not accepted?

What the study could not teach—what the preaching could  
not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

## 9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb  
with the ebb-tide!  
Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!  
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendour  
me, or the men and women generations after me!  
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!  
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful  
hills of Brooklyn!  
Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out  
questions and answers!  
Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!  
Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street  
or public assembly!  
Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call  
me by my highest name!  
Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the  
actor or actress!  
Play the role, the role that is great or small according as  
one makes it!  
Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in un-  
known ways be looking upon you;  
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly,  
yet haste with the hasting current;  
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles  
high in the air;  
Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it  
till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!  
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head,  
or any one's head, in the sunlit water!

Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down,  
white-sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters!

Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!  
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows  
at nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops  
of the houses!

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,  
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,

About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung  
our divinest aromas,

Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample  
and sufficient rivers,

Expand, being than which none else is  
perhaps more spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none else  
is more lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you  
dumb, beautiful ministers,

We receive you with free sense at last, and  
are insatiate henceforward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold  
yourselves from us,

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you per-  
manently within us,

We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection  
in you also,

You furnish your parts toward eternity,

Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

# SONG OF THE ANSWERER

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## 1

Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs  
of the Answerer,  
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the  
sunshine before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message  
from his brother,  
How shall the young man know the whether and when  
of his brother?  
Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stand before the young man face to face, and take  
his right hand in my left and his left hand in  
my right hand,  
And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer  
for him that answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is  
decisive and final,  
Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves  
as amid light,  
Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the  
landscape, people, animals,



The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet  
ocean (so tell I my morning's romanza),  
All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever  
money will buy,  
The best farms, others toiling and planting and  
he unavoidably reaps,  
The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and build-  
ing and he domiciles there,  
Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are  
for him, the ships in the offing,  
The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if  
they are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,  
He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,  
He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers  
and sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that  
the rest never shame them afterward, nor assume  
to command them.

He is the Answerer,  
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be  
answer'd he shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,  
(It is vain to skulk—do you hear that mocking and laughter?  
do you hear the ironical echoes?)  
Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure,  
pride, beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,  
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat  
up and down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may  
go freshly and gently and safely by day or by night,

He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the  
prying of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more  
welcome or universal than he is,  
The person he favours by day or sleeps with at  
night is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom, everything has an  
idiom and tongue,  
He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon  
men, and any man translates, and any man translates  
himself also,  
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner,  
he sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike *How are you, friend?* to the  
President at his levee.

And he says *Good-day, my brother*, to Cudge that hoes  
in the sugar-field,  
And both understand him and know that his  
speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,  
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative  
says to another, *Here is our equal appearing and new.*

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,  
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors  
that he has follow'd the sea,  
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists  
for an artist,  
And the labourers perceive he could labour with them  
and love them,

No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it  
or has follow'd it,

No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers  
and sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,  
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and  
near, removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveller's  
coffee-house claims him,  
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the  
Spaniard is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,  
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the  
Mississippi or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson  
or Paumanok sound, claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges  
his perfect blood,  
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar,  
see themselves in the ways of him, he  
strangely transmutes them,  
They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves  
they are so grown.

## 2

The indications and tally of time,  
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophers,  
Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,  
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant  
company of singers, and their words,  
The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the  
light or dark, but the words of the maker of poems are  
the general light and dark,

The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,  
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,  
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of  
the human race.

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,  
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often  
enough, but rare has the day been, likewise the spot, of  
the birth of the maker of poems, the Answerer,  
(Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd  
such a day, for all its names).

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have  
ostensible names, but the name of each of them is one  
of the singers,  
The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer,  
sweet-singer, night-singer, parlour-singer, love-singer,  
weird-singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,  
The words of true poems do not merely please,  
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august  
masters of beauty;  
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of  
mothers and fathers,  
The words of true poems are the tuft and final  
applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health,  
rudeness of body, withdrawnness,  
Gaiety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the  
words of poems.

The sailor and traveller underlie the maker of  
poems, the Answerer,  
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist,  
artist, all these underlie the maker of  
poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,  
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, poli-  
tics, war, peace, behaviour, histories, essays, daily life,  
and everything else,  
They balance ranks, colours, races, creeds, and the sexes,  
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,  
For ever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,  
longing, fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet are they not the finish, but  
rather the outset,  
They bring none to his or her terminus or to be  
content and full,  
Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of  
stars, to learn one of the meanings,  
To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the  
ceaseless rings and never be quiet again.

## OUR OLD FEUILLAGE

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Always our old feuillage!

Always Florida's green peninsula—always the priceless  
delta of Louisiana—always the cotton-fields of  
Alabama and Texas,

Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the silver  
mountains of New Mexico—always  
soft-breath'd Cuba,

Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea, inseparable  
with the slopes drain'd by the Eastern  
and Western seas,

The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three  
and a half millions of square miles,

The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on  
the main, the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,

The seven millions of distinct families and the same number  
of dwellings—always these, and more, branching  
forth into numberless branches,

Always the free range and diversity—always the  
continent of Democracy;

Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travellers,  
Kanada, the snows;

Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt  
stringing the huge oval lakes;

Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing  
density there, the habitants, friendly, threatening,  
ironical, scorning invaders;

All sights, South, North, East—all deeds, promiscuously  
done at all times,  
All characters, movements, growths, a few  
noticed, myriads unnoticed,  
Through Mannahatta's streets I walking,  
these things gathering,  
On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots,  
steamboats wooding up,  
Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on  
the valleys of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and  
the valleys of the Roanoke and Delaware,  
In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the Adi-  
rondacks, the hills, or lapping the Saginaw  
waters to drink,  
In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock, sitting  
on the water rocking silently,  
In farmers' barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labour  
done, they rest standing, they are too tired,  
Afar on arctic ice the she-walrus lying drowsily while her  
cubs play around,  
The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the  
farthest polar sea, ripply, crystalline, open,  
beyond the floes,  
White drift spooning ahead where the ship in  
the tempest dashes,  
On solid land what is done in cities as the bells  
strike midnight together,  
In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the  
howl of the wolf, the scream of the panther, and the  
hoarse bellow of the elk,  
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in  
summer visible through the clear waters, the  
great trout swimming,

In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large  
black buzzard floating slowly high  
beyond the tree-tops,  
Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines  
and cypresses growing out of the white sand that  
spreads far and flat,  
Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants,  
parasites with colour'd flowers and berries  
enveloping huge trees,  
The waving drapery on the live-oak trailing long and low,  
noiselessly waved by the wind,  
The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper-  
fires and the cooking and eating by  
whites and negroes,  
Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses,  
feeding from troughs,  
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore-trees, the flames with the black smoke from the  
pitch-pine curling and rising;  
Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North  
Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-  
fishery, the large sweep-seines, the windlasses on  
shore work'd by horses, the clearing, curing,  
and packing-houses;  
Deep in the forest in piney woods turpentine dropping  
from the incisions in the trees, there are  
the turpentine works,  
There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground  
in all directions is cover'd with pine straw;  
In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings,  
at the forge, by the furnace-blaze, or  
at the corn-shucking,



In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence, joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the  
aged mulatto nurse,  
On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats  
under shelter of high banks,  
Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo  
or fiddle, others sit on the gunwale  
smoking and talking;  
Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American  
mimic, singing in the Great Dismal Swamp,  
There are the greenish waters, the resinous odour, the  
plenteous moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree;  
Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company  
from an excursion returning home at evening,  
the musket-muzzles all bear bunches of flowers  
presented by women;  
Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen  
asleep (how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!);  
The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of  
the Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps  
his eyes around;  
California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume,  
the stanch California friendship, the sweet air,  
the graves one in passing meets solitary just aside  
the horse-path;  
Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers  
driving mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales  
piled on banks and wharves;  
Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American  
Soul, with equal hemispheres, one Love, one  
Dilation or Pride;

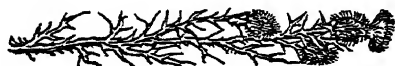
In arrière the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines,  
the calumet, the pipe of good-will,  
arbitration, and indorsement,  
The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and  
then toward the earth,  
The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces  
and guttural exclamations,  
The setting out of the war-party, the long  
and stealthy march,  
The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and  
slaughter of enemies;  
All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these  
States, reminiscences, institutions,  
All these States compact, every square mile of these States  
without excepting a particle;  
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country  
fields, Paumanok's fields,  
Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies  
shuffling between each other, ascending high  
in the air,  
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall  
traveller southward but returning northward early  
in the spring,  
The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd  
of cows and shouting to them as they loiter to browse  
by the roadside,  
The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charles-  
ton, New Orleans, San Francisco,  
The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan;  
Evening—me in my room—the setting sun,  
The setting summer sun shining in my open window, show-  
ing the swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air  
in the centre of the room, darting athwart, up and

down, casting swift shadows in specks on the opposite  
wall where the shine is;  
The athletic American matron speaking in public to  
crowds of listeners,  
Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copious-  
ness, the individuality of the States, each for itself—  
the money-makers,  
Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass,  
lever, pulley, all certainties,  
The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,  
In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on  
the firm earth, the lands, my lands,  
O lands! all so dear to me—what you are (whatever it is),  
I putting it at random in these songs, become a part  
of that, whatever it is,  
Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping,  
with the myriads of gulls wintering along the  
coasts of Florida,  
Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansaw, the Rio  
Grande, the Neuces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the  
Red River, the Saskatchewan or the Osage, I with the  
spring waters laughing and skipping and running,  
Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Pau-  
manok, I with parties of snowy herons wading in the  
wet to seek worms and aquatic plants,  
Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from  
piercing the crow with its bill, for amusement—and  
I triumphantly twittering,  
The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to  
refresh themselves, the body of the flock feed, the  
sentinels outside move around with erect heads watch-  
ing, and are from time to time reliev'd by other sen-  
tinels—and I feeding and taking turns with the rest,

In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by  
hunters, rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plung-  
ing with his fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives—and  
I, plunging at the hunters, corner'd and desperate,  
In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses,  
and the countless workmen working in the shops,  
And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less  
in myself than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,  
Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body  
no more inevitably united, part to part, and made  
out of a thousand diverse contributions one identity,  
any more than my lands are inevitably united and  
made ONE IDENTITY;  
Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral Plains,  
Cities, labours, death, animals, products, war, good and  
evil—these me,  
These affording, in all their particulars, the old feuillage  
to me and to America, how can I do less than pass the  
clew of the union of them, to afford the like to you?  
Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves,  
that you also be eligible as I am?  
How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to  
collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage  
of these States?

## A SONG OF JOYS

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O to make the most jubilant song!  
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!  
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and  
balance of fishes!  
O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!  
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like lightning!  
It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,  
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive!  
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-  
whistle, the laughing locomotive!  
To push with resistless way and speed off in the distance.

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!  
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist  
fresh stillness of the woods,  
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all  
through the forenoon.

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!  
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the cool  
gurgling by the ears and hair.

O the fireman's joys!  
I hear the alarm at dead of night,  
I hear bells, shouts! I pass the crowd, I run!  
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the  
arena in perfect condition, conscious of power, thirst-  
ing to meet his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the  
human soul is capable of generating and emitting in  
steady and limitless floods.

O the mother's joys!  
The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the an-  
guish, the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation,  
The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of  
concord and harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,  
To hear the birds sing once more,  
To ramble about the house and barn and over the  
fields once more,  
And through the orchard and along the old  
lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or  
along the coast,  
To continue and be employ'd there all my life,  
The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds ex-  
posed at low water,  
The work of fishermen, the work of the  
eel-fisher and clam-fisher;

I come with my clam-rake and spade, I come  
with my eel-spear,  
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam-diggers on the flats,  
I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like a  
mettlesome young man;  
In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel  
out on foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes  
in the ice,  
Behold me well-clothed going gaily or returning in the  
afternoon, my brood of tough boys accompanying me,  
My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be  
with no one else so well as they love to be with me,  
By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift the  
lobster-pots where they are sunk with heavy stones  
(I know the buoys),  
O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the  
water as I row just before sunrise toward the buoys,  
I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green lob-  
sters are desperate with their claws as I take them out,  
I insert wooden pegs in the joints of their pincers,  
I go to all the places one after another, and then row back  
to the shore,  
There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters shall be  
boil'd till their colour becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,  
Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem  
to fill the water for miles;  
Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake bay, I one  
of the brown-faced crew;

Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand  
with braced body,  
My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws far out  
the coils of slender rope,  
In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty  
skiffs, my companions.

O boat on the rivers,  
The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb  
scenery, the steamers,  
The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional  
timber-raft and the raftsmen with  
long-reaching sweep-oars,  
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when  
they cook supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread!  
Something far away from a puny and pious life!  
Something unproved! something in a trance!  
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,  
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof, the  
ample and shadow'd space,  
The furnace, the liquid pour'd out and running.

O to resume the joys of the soldier!  
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—to  
feel his sympathy!  
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays  
of his smile!  
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the drums beat!  
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of the  
bayonets and musket-barrels in the sun!



To see the men fall and die and not complain!  
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!

To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy!  
O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise again!  
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic  
breezes fanning me,

I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head,  
*There—she blows!*

Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we  
descend, wild with excitement,

I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey  
where he lies,

We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous  
mass, lethargic, basking,

I see the harpooner standing up, I see the weapon dart  
from his vigorous arm;

O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale, settling,  
running to windward, tows me,

Again I see him rise to breathe, we now close again,

I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd  
in the wound,

Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is  
leaving him fast,

As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles narrower  
and narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I  
see him die,

He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle, and  
then falls flat and still in the bloody foam.

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!  
My children and grand-children, my white hair and beard,

My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch  
of my life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!

I am more than eighty years of age, I am the  
most venerable mother,

How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh to me!  
What attractions are these beyond any before? what bloom  
more than the bloom of youth?

What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises  
out of me?

O the orator's joys!

To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice out  
from the ribs and throat,

To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,  
To lead America—to quell America with a great tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving  
identity through materials and loving them, observ-  
ing characters and absorbing them,

My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight, hear-  
ing, touch, reason, articulation, comparison, memory,  
and the like,

The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my  
senses and flesh,

My body done with materials my sight done with  
my material eyes,

Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my ma-  
terial eyes which finally see,

Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs,  
shouts, embraces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys!

Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's, Iowan's,  
Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys!

To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,

To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,

To plough land in the spring for maize,

To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples  
in the fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good  
place along shore,

To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep, or race naked  
along the shore.

O to realise space!

The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,

To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and  
flying clouds, as one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!

To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant  
known or unknown,

To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,

To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,

To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of  
a broad chest,

To confront with your personality all the other person-  
alities of the earth.

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth?

Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word  
and laughing face?

Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of  
the wide-breath'd games?  
Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room  
and the dancers?  
Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse, and drinking?

Yet O my soul supreme!  
Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought?  
Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the  
tender, gloomy heart?  
Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the  
suffering and the struggle?  
The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn mus-  
ings day or night?  
Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres,  
Time and Space?  
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine  
wife, the sweet, eternal, perfect comrade?  
Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee, O soul.

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,  
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,  
No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints  
or scornful criticisms,  
To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground,  
proving my interior soul impregnable,  
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of death!  
The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a  
few moments, for reasons,  
Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd,  
render'd to powder, or buried,

My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,  
My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the purifications, further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

O to attract by more than attraction!  
How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which obeys none of the rest,  
It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

O to struggle against great odds, to  
meet enemies undaunted!  
To be entirely alone with them, to find how much  
one can stand!  
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to face!  
To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of guns  
with perfect nonchalancel  
To be indeed a God!

O to sail to sea in a ship!  
To leave this steady unendurable land,  
To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks and the houses,  
To leave you, O you solid motionless land, and  
entering a ship,  
To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!  
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll  
on, float on!  
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,  
A ship itself (see indeed these sails I spread to the  
sun and air),  
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.

## SONG OF THE BROAD-AXE

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### 1

Weapon shapely, naked, wan,  
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,  
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and  
    lip only one,  
Grey-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a  
    little seed sown,  
Resting the grass amid and upon,  
To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine  
    trades, sights, and sounds,  
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,  
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of  
    the great organ.

### 2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind,  
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,  
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,  
Welcome are lands of gold,  
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those  
    of the grape,  
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,  
Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white  
    potato and sweet potato,  
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,

Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,  
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the  
teeming soil of orchards, flax, honey, hemp;  
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands,  
Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,  
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,  
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,  
Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

## 3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,  
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space  
clear'd for a garden,  
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the  
storm is lull'd,  
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought  
of the sea,  
The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their  
beam ends, and the cutting away of masts,  
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd  
houses and barns,  
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture  
of men, families, goods,  
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,  
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found  
it, the outset anywhere,  
The settlements of the Arkansas,  
Colorado, Ottawa, Willamette,  
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;  
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,  
The beauty of wood-boys, and wood-men with their  
clear, untrimm'd faces,

The beauty of independence, departure, actions that  
rely on themselves,  
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the  
boundless impatience of restraint,  
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random  
types, the solidification;  
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard  
schooners and sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,  
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods,  
stripes of snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional  
snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song,  
the natural life of the woods, the strong day's work,  
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the  
talk, the bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;  
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places,  
laying them regular,  
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according  
as they were prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the  
men, their curv'd limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, hold-  
ing on by posts and braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm  
wielding the axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward  
on the bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;  
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,



The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each  
end, carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick  
for a cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right  
hands rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred  
feet from front to rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of  
the trowels striking the bricks,  
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in  
its place, and set with a knock of the trowel handle,  
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards,  
and the steady replenishing by the hod-men;  
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row  
of well-grown apprentices,  
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping  
it toward the shape of a mast,  
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly  
into the pine,  
The butter-colour'd chips flying off in great  
flakes and slivers,  
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips  
in easy costumes,  
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads,  
floats, stays against the sea;  
The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in  
the close-pack'd square,  
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble  
stepping and daring,  
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling  
in line, the rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,  
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear  
of the hooks and ladders and their execution,

The crash and cut-away of connecting wood-work, or  
through floors if the fire smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare  
and dense shadows;  
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of  
iron after him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the  
welder and temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and  
trying the edge with his thumb,  
The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly  
in the socket;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the  
past users also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on  
the helmeted head,  
The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of  
friend and foe thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,  
The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates,  
the truce and parley,  
The sack of an old city in its time,  
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots  
tumultuously and disorderly,  
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of  
women in the gripe of brigands,  
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running,  
old persons despairing,

The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,  
The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,  
The power of personality just or unjust.

## 4

Muscle and pluck for ever!  
What invigorates life invigorates death,  
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much  
as the delicatessen of the earth and of man,  
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?  
Do you think a great city endures?  
Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution? or the best built steamships?  
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres of engineering, forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,  
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians  
play for them,  
The show passes, all does well enough of course,  
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in  
the whole world.

## 5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of  
stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits  
or produce merely,

Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the  
anchor-lifters of the departing,  
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops  
selling goods from the rest of the earth,  
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the  
place where money is plentiest,  
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of  
orators and bards,  
Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves  
them in return and understands them,  
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common  
words and deeds,  
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,  
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,  
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending  
audacity of elected persons,  
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the  
whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,  
Where outside authority enters always after the prece-  
dence of inside authority,  
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and Presi-  
dent, Mayor, Governor and what not, are  
agents for pay,  
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to  
depend on themselves,  
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,  
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,  
Where women walk in public processions in the streets the  
same as the men,

Where they enter the public assembly and take places the  
same as the men;  
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,  
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,  
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,  
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
There the great city stands.

## 6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!  
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before  
a man's or woman's look.

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;  
A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability  
of the universe,  
When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,  
The dispute on the soul stops,  
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back,  
or laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?  
What is your respectability now?  
What are your theology, tuition, society,  
traditions, statute-books, now?  
Where are your jibes of being now?  
Where are your cavils about the soul now?

## 7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the  
best for all the forbidding appearance,  
There is the mine, there are the miners,

The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the  
    hammersmen are at hand with their  
    tongs and hammers,  
What always served and always serves is at hand.

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,  
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and  
    long ere the Greek,  
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,  
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the  
    most ancient Hindustanee,  
Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those  
    whose relics remain in Central America,  
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn  
    pillars and the druids,  
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-  
    cover'd hills of Scandinavia,  
Served those who time out of mind made on the granite  
    walls rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars,  
    ships, ocean waves,  
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the  
    pastoral tribes and nomads,  
Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates  
    of the Baltic,  
Served before any of those the venerable and harmless  
    men of Ethiopia,  
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and  
    the making of those for war,  
Served all great works on land and all great works  
    on the sea,  
For the mediæval ages and before the mediæval ages,  
Served not the living only then as now, but served the dead.

## 8

I see the European headsman,  
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and  
strong naked arms,  
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately, European headsman?  
Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,  
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,  
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd  
ministers, rejected kings,  
Rivals, traitors, prisoners, disgraced chieftains and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,  
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,  
(Mind you, O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall  
never run out).

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,  
Both blade and helve are clean,  
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they  
clasp no more the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,  
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer  
any axe upon it,  
I see the mighty friendly emblem of the power of my own  
race, the newest, largest race.

## 9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,  
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!  
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,  
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ,  
    exhibition-house, library,  
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,  
Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane,  
    mallet, wedge, rounce,  
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,  
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame,  
    and what not,  
Capitols of States and capitol of the nation of States,  
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for  
    the poor or sick,  
Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure  
    of all seas.

The shapes arise!  
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all  
    that neighbours them,  
Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the  
    Penobscot or Kennebec,  
Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by  
    the little lakes, or on the Columbia,  
Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande,  
    friendly gatherings, the characters and fun,  
Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or  
    down by the Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts  
    and off coasts,



Self-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages  
through the ice.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,

Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,

Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast  
frameworks, girders, arches,

Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal  
craft, river craft,

Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western  
seas, and in many a bay and by-place,

The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hack-  
matack-roots for knees,

The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds,  
the workmen busy outside and inside,

The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the  
adze, bolt, line, square, gauge, and bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise!

The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,

The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,

The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the  
posts of the bride's bed,

The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers be-  
neath, the shape of the babe's cradle,

The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks  
for dancers' feet,

The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of  
the friendly parents and children,

The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young  
man and woman, the roof over the well-married  
young man and woman,  
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste  
wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste husband, con-  
tent after his day's work.

The shapes arise!  
The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and  
of him or her seated in the place,  
The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young  
rum-drinker and the old rum-drinker,  
The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod  
by sneaking footsteps,  
The shape of the sly settee, and the  
adulterous unwholesome couple,  
The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish  
winnings and losings,  
The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sen-  
tenced murderer, the murderer with haggard face  
and pinion'd arms,  
The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-  
lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!  
Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,  
The door passing the dis sever'd friend flush'd and in haste,  
The door that admits good news and bad news,  
The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,  
The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous ab-  
sence, diseas'd, broken down, without  
innocence, without means.

## 11

Her shape arises,  
She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,  
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her  
gross and soil'd,  
She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is  
conceal'd from her,  
She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,  
She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has no  
reason to fear and she does not fear,  
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are  
idle to her as she passes,  
She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do  
not offend her,  
She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them,  
she is strong,  
She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger  
than she is.

## 12

The main shapes arise!  
Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,  
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,  
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,  
Shapes of friends and home-givers of the whole earth,  
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.

# SONG OF THE EXPOSITION

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## 1

(Ah, little recks the labourer,  
How near his work is holding him to God,  
The loving Labourer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,  
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,  
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,  
To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious fire,  
Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse, rehabilitate,  
To obey as well as command, to follow more than to lead,  
These also are the lessons of our New World;  
While how little the New after all, how much the  
Old, Old World!

Long and long has the grass been growing,  
Long and long has the rain been falling,  
Long has the globe been rolling round.

## 2

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,  
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,  
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and  
Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings,  
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of  
your snowy Parnassus,  
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate  
and on Mount Moriah,

The same on the walls of your German, French, and  
Spanish castles, and Italian collections,  
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried  
domain awaits, demands you.

## 3

Responsive to our summons,  
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,  
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,  
She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,  
I scent the odour of her breath's delicious fragrance,  
I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,  
Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames! can I believe then,  
Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of  
them retain her?  
Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories,  
poems, old associations, magnetise and hold on to her?  
But that she's left them all—and here?

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,  
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see her,  
The same undying soul of earth's, activity's,  
beauty's, heroism's expression,  
Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of  
her former themes,  
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,  
Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice  
by Castaly's fountain,  
Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all  
those century-baffling tombs,

Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted warriors,  
ended the primitive call of the muses,  
Calliope's call for ever closed, Clio,  
Melpomene, Thalia dead,  
Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the  
quest of the holy Graal,  
Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,  
The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped  
with the sunrise,  
Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne,  
Roland, Oliver gone,  
Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk  
from its waters reflected,  
Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot  
and Calahad, all gone, dissolv'd utterly  
like an exhalation;  
Pass'd! pass'd! for us, for ever pass'd, that once so mighty  
world, now void, inanimate, phantom world,  
Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its  
gorgeous legends, myths,  
Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords  
and courtly dames,  
Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown  
and armour on,  
Blazon'd with Shakespeare's purple page,  
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious emigré  
(having it is true in her day, although the same,  
changed, journey'd considerable),  
Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a  
path for herself, striding through the confusion,

By thud of machinery and shrill  
    steam-whistle undismay'd,  
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe,  
    gasometers, artificial fertilisers,  
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,  
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

## 4

But hold—don't I forget my manners?  
To introduce the stranger (what else indeed do I live to  
    chant for?) to thee Columbia;  
In liberty's name welcome immortal! clasp hands,  
And ever henceforth sisters dear be both.

Fear not, O Muse! truly new ways and days  
    receive, surround you,  
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,  
And yet the same old human race, the  
    same within, without,  
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same,  
    yearnings the same,  
The same old love, beauty and use the same.

## 5

We do not blame thee, elder World, nor really separate  
    ourselves from thee,  
(Would the son separate himself from the father?)  
Looking back on thee, seeing thee to thy duties,  
    grandeurs, through the past ages bending, building,  
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,  
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,

Prouder than Milan's statued, spired cathedral,  
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,  
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all,  
The great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,  
A keep for life for practical invention.

As in a waking vision,  
E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy  
    outside and in,  
Its manifold ensemble.

Around the palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,  
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,  
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron façades,  
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfullest hues,  
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine, and crimson,  
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath  
    thy banner Freedom,  
The banners of the States and flags of every land,  
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards perfect human life be started,  
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Not only all the world of works, trade, products,  
But all the workmen of the world here to be represented.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,  
In every state of practical, busy movement, the  
    rills of civilisation,  
Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as  
    if by magic,  
The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,



Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread and  
cloth before you,  
You shall see hands at work at all the old processes and all  
the new ones,  
You shall see the various grains and how flour is made and  
then bread baked by the bakers,  
You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada pass-  
ing on and on till they become bullion,  
You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what  
a composing-stick is,  
You shall mark in amazement the Hoe press whirling its  
cylinder, shedding the printed leaves steady and fast,  
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be  
created before you.

In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach you the  
infinite lessons of minerals,  
In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be illustrated—  
in another, animals, animal life and development.

One stately house shall be the music house,  
Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall  
all be here,  
None shall be slighted, none but shall here be  
honour'd, help'd, exempl'd.

## 6

(This, this and these, America, shall be *your*  
pyramids and obelisks,  
Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,  
Your temple at Olympia.)

The male and female many labouring not,  
Shall ever here confront the labouring many,

With precious benefits to both, glory to all,  
To thee America, and thee eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit powerful Matrons!  
In your vast state vaster than all the old,  
Echoed through long, long centuries to come,  
To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,  
Practical, peaceful life, the people's life,  
the People themselves,  
Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

7

Away with themes of war! away with war itself!  
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return that  
show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses!  
That hell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or  
for lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,  
And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,  
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,  
Thy pennants labour, loosen'd to the breeze,  
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear.

Away with old romance!  
Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts,  
Away with love verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues,  
amours of idlers,  
Fitted for only banquets of the night where dancers to  
late music slide,  
The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipations  
of the few,  
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath  
the dazzling chandeliers.

To you, ye reverent sane sisters,  
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets  
    and for art,  
To exalt the present and the real,  
To teach the average man the glory of his daily  
    walk and trade,  
To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are never  
    to be baffled,  
To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,  
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables, flowers,  
For every man to see to it that he really do something, for  
    every woman too;  
To use the hammer and the saw (rip, or cross-cut),  
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,  
To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,  
To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the  
    washing, cooking, cleaning,  
And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say I bring thee Muse to-day and here,  
All occupations, duties broad and close,  
Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,  
The old, old practical burdens, interests, joys,  
The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,  
The house-comforts, the house itself and all its belongings,  
Food and its preservation, chemistry applied to it,  
Whatever forms the average, strong, complete,  
    sweet-blooded man or woman, the  
    perfect longeve personality,  
And helps its present life to health and happiness, and  
    shapes its soul,  
For the eternal real life to come.

With latest connections, works, the inter-transportation  
of the world,  
Steam-power, the great express lines, gas, petroleum,  
These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,  
The Pacific railroad, the Suez Canal, the Mont Cenis and  
Gothard and Hoosac tunnels, the Brooklyn Bridge,  
This earth all spann'd with iron rails, with lines of steam-  
ships threading every sea,  
Our own rondure, the current globe I bring.

## 8

And thou America,  
Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee  
above all towering,  
With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;  
Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,  
Thee, ever thee, I sing.

Thou, also thou, a World,  
With all thy wide geographies,  
manifold, different, distant,  
Rounded by thee in one—one common orbic language,  
One common indivisible destiny for All.

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe to those your  
ministers in earnest,  
I here personify and call my themes, to make them  
pass before ye.

Behold, America! (and thou, ineffable guest and sister!)  
For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands;  
Behold! thy fields and farms, thy far-off  
woods and mountains,  
As in procession coming.

Behold, the sea itself,  
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;  
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle .  
    the green and blue,  
See, the steamers coming and going, steamers in or  
    out of port,  
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.

Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,  
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful axemen,  
Wielding all day their axes.

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their  
    wheels, thy oarsmen,  
How the ash writhes under those muscular arms!

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,  
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths swinging their sledges,  
Overhand so steady, overhand they turn and fall  
    with joyous clank,  
Like a tumult of laughter.

Mark the spirit of invention everywhere, thy rapid patents,  
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising,  
See, from their chimneys how the tall flame-fires stream.

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,  
Thy wealthy daughter-states, Eastern and Western,  
Thy varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri,  
    Georgia, Texas, and the rest,  
Thy limitless crops, grass, wheat, sugar, oil, corn,  
    rice, hemp, hops,

Thy barns all fill'd, the endless freight-train and  
the bulging storehouse,  
The grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples  
in thy orchards,  
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal,  
thy gold and silver,  
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

All thine, O sacred Union!  
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines,  
City and State, North, South, item and aggregate,  
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute thou! bulwark of all!  
For well we know that while thou givest each and all  
(generous as God),  
Without thee neither all nor each, nor land, home,  
Nor ship, nor mine, nor any here this day secure,  
Nor aught, nor any day secure.

## 9

And thou, the Emblem waving over all!  
Delicate beauty, a word to thee (it may be salutary),  
Remember thou hast not always been as here to-day  
so comfortably ensovereign'd,  
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee flag,  
Not quite so trim and whole and freshly blooming in folds  
of stainless silk,  
But I have seen thee bunting, to tatters torn upon  
thy splinter'd staff,  
Or clutch'd to some young colour-bearer's breast  
with desperate hands,  
Savagely struggled for, for life or death, fought over long,

'Mid cannons' thunder-crash and many a curse and groan  
and yell, and rifle-volleys cracking sharp,  
And moving masses as wild demons surging, and lives  
as nothing risk'd,  
For thy mere remnant grimed with dirt and smoke and  
sopp'd in blood,  
For sake of that, my beauty, and that thou might'st dally  
as now secure up there,  
Many a good man have I seen go under.

Now here and these and hence in peace, all thine, O Flag!  
And here and hence for thee, O universal Muse! and  
thou for them!  
And here and hence, O Union, all the work  
and workmen thine!  
None separate from thee—henceforth One only,  
we and thou,  
(For the blood of the children, what is it, only  
the blood maternal?  
And lives and works, what are they all at last, except the  
roads to faith and death?)

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for  
thee, dear Mother,  
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee;  
Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross  
or lucre—it is for thee, the soul in  
thee, electric, spiritual!  
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee! cities and  
States in thee!  
Our freedom all in thee! our very lives in thee!

# SONG OF THE REDWOOD-TREE

---



## 1

A California song,  
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to  
breathe as air,  
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing,  
or hamadryads departing,  
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the  
earth and sky,  
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

*Farewell my brethren,  
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighbouring waters  
My time has ended, my term has come.*

Along the northern coast,  
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves,  
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,  
With the surge for base and accompaniment  
low and hoarse,  
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven  
by strong arms,  
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the  
redwood forest dense,  
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.

The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not,  
The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw  
men heard not,



As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand  
years to join the refrain,  
But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves,  
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,  
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its  
foot-thick bark,  
That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past  
only but the future.

*You untold life of me,  
And all you venerable and innocent joys,  
Perennial hardy life of me with joys' mid rain and many  
a summer sun,  
And the white snows and night and the wild winds;  
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys un-  
reck'd by man,  
(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too  
have consciousness, identity,  
And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth),  
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,  
Our time, our term has come.*

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,  
We who have grandly fill'd our time;  
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,  
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,  
And leave the field for them.*

*For them predicted long,  
For a superber race, they too grandly fill their time,  
For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings!*

*In them these skies and airs, these mountain  
peaks, Shasta, Nevadas,  
These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these  
valleys, far Yosemite,  
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.*

*Then to a loftier strain,  
Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,  
As if the heirs, the deities of the West,  
Joining with master-tongue bore part.*

*Not wan from Asia's fetiches,  
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,  
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of  
wars and scaffolds everywhere),  
But come from Nature's long and harmless throes,  
peacefully builded thence,  
These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,  
To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,  
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.*

*You occult deep volitions,  
You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on  
yourself, giving not taking law,  
You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence  
life and love and aught that comes from life and love,  
You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of  
America (age upon age working in death the  
same as life),  
You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really  
shape and mould the New World, adjusting it to  
Time and Space,*

*You hidden national will lying in your abysms, conceal'd  
but ever alert,  
You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-  
be unconscious of yourselves,  
Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations  
of the surface;  
You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds,  
arts, statutes, literatures,  
Here build your homes for good, establish here, these  
areas entire, lands of the Western shore,  
We pledge, we dedicate to you.*

*For man of you, your characteristic race,  
Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower  
proportionate to Nature,  
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by  
wall or roof,  
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy,  
here patiently inure,  
Here heed himself, unfold himself (not others' formulas  
heed), here fill his time,  
To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,  
To disappear, to serve.*

*Thus on the northern coast,  
In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains, and  
the music of choppers' axes,  
The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled  
shriek, the groan,  
Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices  
ecstatic, ancient and rustling,  
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,*

All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,  
From the Cascade range to the Wahsatch, or Idaho  
far, or Utah,  
To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,  
The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming human-  
ity, the settlements, features all,  
In the Mendocino woods I caught.

## 2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,  
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny  
and ample lands,  
The long and varied stretch from Puget Sound  
to Colorado south,  
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys  
and mountain cliffs,  
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the  
silent, cyclic chemistry,  
The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied sur-  
face ripening, the rich ores forming beneath;  
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,  
A swarming and busy race settling  
and organising everywhere,  
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going  
out to the whole world,  
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island  
paradises of the Pacific,  
Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the  
rivers, the railroads, with many a thrifty  
farm, with machinery,  
And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings  
of yellow gold.

## 3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,  
(These but the means, the implements,  
the standing-ground),

I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of  
years, till now deferr'd,  
Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,  
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or  
stalwart trees imperial,  
In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or  
even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,  
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,  
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America,  
heir of the past so grand,  
To build a grander future.

# A SONG FOR OCCUPATIONS

---



## 1

A song for occupations!  
In the labour of engines and trades and the labour of fields  
I find the developments,  
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!  
Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd out of me, what would it amount to?  
Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise statesman, what would it amount to?  
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,  
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,  
I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have my own whoever enjoys me,  
I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop, I stand as nigh as the nighest in the same shop,  
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I demand as good as your brother or dearest friend,  
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night,  
I must be personally as welcome,

If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so  
for your sake,

If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you  
think, I cannot remember my own foolish  
and outlaw'd deeds?

If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side  
of the table,

If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her,  
why I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?

Is it you then that thought yourself less?

Is it you that thought the President greater than you?

Or the rich better off than you? or the educated  
wiser than you?

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were once drunk,  
or a thief,

Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,

Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar  
and never saw your name in print,

Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

## 2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, un-  
heard, untouchable and untouching,

It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle  
whether you are alive or no,

I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every  
country, indoors and outdoors, one just as much as the  
other, I see,

And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,  
The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,  
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,  
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows  
    working on farms,  
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,  
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,  
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need yet always have,  
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,  
I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of  
    value, but offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,  
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes dis-  
    cussion and print,  
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,  
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than  
    your hearing and sight are from you,  
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever  
    provoked by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read  
    nothing about it,  
You may read the President's message and read nothing  
    about it there,  
Nothing in the reports from the State department or Treas-  
    ury department, or in the daily papers  
    or weekly papers,



Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any accounts of stock.

## 3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,  
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of  
them is something grand,  
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that  
it is happiness,  
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation  
or bon-mot or reconnaissance,  
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out  
well for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,  
And not something which may yet be retracted in  
a certain contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity,  
the greed that with perfect complaisance devours all things,  
The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable  
joys and sorrows,  
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and  
the wonders that fill each minute of time for ever,  
What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?  
Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or  
for the profits of your store?  
Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's  
leisure, or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and  
form that it might be painted in a picture?

Or men and women that they might be written of,  
and songs sung?  
Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious combinations and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the savans?  
Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?  
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy names?  
Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agriculture itself?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and the practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate them so high?  
Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,  
I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and  
our Constitution grand,  
I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,  
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,  
Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine,  
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still,  
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life,  
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than they are shed out of you.

## 4

The sun of all known reverence I add up in you who-  
ever you are,

The President is there in the White House for you, it is not  
you who are here for him,

The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you  
here for them,

The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,  
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities,  
the going and coming of commerce and mails, are  
all for you.

List close my scholars dear,  
Doctrines, politics and civilisation exurge from you,  
Sculpture and monuments and anything inscribed any-  
where are tallied in you,

The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the rec-  
ords reach is in you this hour, and myths and  
tales the same,

If you were not breathing and walking here, where would  
they all be?

The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and  
plays would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it,  
(Did you think it was in the white or grey stone? or the  
lines of the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded  
by the instruments,

It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor  
the beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer

singing his sweet romanza, nor that of the men's  
chorus, nor that of the women's chorus,  
It is nearer and farther than they.

5

Will the whole come back then?  
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-  
glass? is there nothing greater or more?  
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul?

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,  
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,  
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-  
roofing, shingle-dressing,  
Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of side-  
walks by flaggers,  
The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln  
and brick-kiln—  
Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the  
darkness, echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast  
native thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,  
Iron-workers, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-  
banks, men around feeling the melt with huge crow-  
bars, lumps of ore, the due combining of  
ore, limestone, coal,  
The blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-  
lump at the bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-  
mill, the stumpy bars of pig-iron, the strong clean-  
shaped T-rail for railroads,  
Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house,  
steam-saws, the great mills and factories,

Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades or window  
or door-lintels, the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to  
protect the thumb,  
The caking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and  
the fire under the kettle,  
The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of  
the sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-  
knife of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the  
work with ice,  
The work and tools of the rigger, grappler,  
sail-maker, block-maker,  
Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colours, brushes,  
brush-making, glazier's implements,  
The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments,  
the decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,  
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart meas-  
ure, the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or  
metal, the making of all sorts of edged tools,  
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, everything that  
is done by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,  
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-  
twisting, distilling, sign-making, lime-burning, cotton-  
picking, electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,  
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines,  
ploughing-machines, thrashing-  
machines, steam wagons,  
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,  
Pyrotechny, letting off colour'd fireworks at night, fancy  
figures and jets;  
Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the  
butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,  
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook,  
the scalding-tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the

packer's maul, and the plenteous winter-work  
    of pork-packing,  
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the barrels  
    and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded  
    barges, the high piles on wharves and levees,  
The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads,  
    coasters, fish-boats, canals;  
The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop,  
    yard, store, or factory,  
These shows all near you by day and night—workman!  
    whoever you are, your daily life!  
In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them  
    far more than you estimated (and far less also),  
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you  
    and me,  
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things,  
    regardless of estimation,  
In them the development good—in them all  
    themes, hints, possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do not  
    advise you to stop,  
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,  
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,  
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good  
    as the best,  
In folks nearest to you finding the  
    sweetest, strongest, lovingest,  
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place,  
    not for another hour but this hour,

Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother,  
    nighest neighbour—woman in mother, sister, wife,  
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in  
    poems or anywhere,  
You workwomen and workmen of these States having your  
    own divine and strong life,  
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver  
    that carved the supporting desk,  
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day,  
    and when they touch my body back again,  
When a university course convinces like a slumbering  
    woman and child convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the  
    night-watchman's daughter,  
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are  
    my friendly companions,  
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of  
    them as I do of men and women like you.

# A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

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## 1

A song of the rolling earth, and of words according,  
Were you thinking that those were the words, those up-  
right lines? those curves, angles, dots?  
No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in  
the ground and sea,  
They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those deli-  
cious sounds out of your friends' mouths?  
No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,  
(In the best poems reappears the body, man's or woman's,  
well-shaped, natural, gay,  
Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the  
need of shame).

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,  
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate  
with theirs—my name is nothing to them,  
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what  
would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are  
words, sayings, meanings,  
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and  
women, are sayings and meanings also.



The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words  
of the earth,  
The masters know the earth's words and use them more  
than audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,  
The earth neither lags nor hastens,  
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from  
the jump,  
It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show  
just as much as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,  
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not  
so conceal'd either.  
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,  
They are imbued through all things  
conveying themselves willingly,  
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,  
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am  
I to you?  
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez!  
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?  
Will you squat and stifle there?)

The earth does not argue,  
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,  
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,  
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,  
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,  
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit itself,  
possesses still underneath,  
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of  
heroes, the wail of slaves,  
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter  
of young people, accents of bargainers,  
Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great  
mother never fail,  
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and  
reflection does not fail,  
Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we  
pursue does not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,  
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,  
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder  
and younger sisters,  
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,  
With the fascinations of youth and the equal  
fascinations of age,  
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd,  
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror,  
while her eyes glance back from it,  
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,  
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before  
her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,  
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,

Duly approach and pass with their companions  
or a companion,  
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the  
countenances of those who are with them,  
From the countenances of children or women or  
the manly countenance,  
From the open countenances of animals or  
from inanimate things,  
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite appa-  
rition of the sky,  
From our countenances, mine and yours,  
faithfully returning them,  
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never  
twice with the same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred  
and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;  
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three  
hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and  
necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,  
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, for ever withstanding,  
passing, carrying,  
The soul's realisation and determination still inheriting,  
The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering  
and dividing,  
No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on  
no rock striking,  
Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing,  
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are  
especially for you,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is  
solid and liquid,  
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang  
in the sky,  
For none more than you are the present and the past,  
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the  
word of the past and present, and the true  
word of immortality;  
No one can acquire for another—not one,  
No one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,  
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,  
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back  
most to him,  
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,  
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,  
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—  
it cannot fail,  
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and  
actress not to the audience,  
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his  
own, or the indication of his own.

## 3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her  
who shall be complete,  
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her  
who remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate those of the earth,  
There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate the theory of the earth,  
No politics, song, religion, behaviour, or what not, is of account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,  
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that which responds love,  
It is that which contains itself, which never invites and never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,  
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings of the earth,  
Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths of the earth,  
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,  
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,  
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,  
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,  
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or  
any is best,  
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,  
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,  
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,  
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as  
real as before,  
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,  
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,  
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what  
were they then?  
If they had not reference to you in especial what  
were they then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith  
that tells the best,  
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves  
the best untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!  
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!  
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,  
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,

When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,  
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,  
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you,  
and encloses all and is faithful to all,  
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive  
that you are not an iota less than they,  
You shall be fully glorified in them.

YOUTH, DAY, OLD AGE, AND NIGHT

Youth, large, lusty, loving—youth full of  
grace, force, fascination,  
Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal  
grace, force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun,  
action, ambition, laughter,  
The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep  
and restoring darkness.

# BIRDS OF PASSAGE

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## SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL

### 1

Come, said the Muse,  
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,  
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,  
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,  
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the  
seed is waiting.

### 2

Lo! keen-eyed towering science,  
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,  
Successive absolute fiats issuing.

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,  
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,  
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,  
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea),



For it the partial to the permanent flowing,  
For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution,  
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.

Forth from their masks, no matter what,  
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and  
    guile and tears,  
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,  
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of  
    men and states,  
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,  
Only the good is universal.

## 3

Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,  
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,  
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,  
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,  
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,  
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,  
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,  
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,  
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,  
Along the mighty labyrinth.

## 4

And thou, America,  
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,  
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,  
Embracing, carrying, welcoming all, thou too by pathways  
broad and new,  
To the ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs  
of the past,  
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,  
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorb-  
ing, comprehending all,  
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,  
Love like the light silently wrapping all,  
Nature's amelioration blessing all,  
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,  
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to  
spiritual images ripening.

Give me, O God, to sing that thought,  
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,  
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold  
not from us,  
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?  
Nay but the lack of it the dream,

And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,  
And all the world a dream.

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

Come my tan-faced children,  
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,  
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,  
We must march, my darlings, we must bear the  
brunt of danger,  
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,  
So impatient, full of action, full of manly  
pride and friendship,  
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping  
with the foremost,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there  
beyond the seas?  
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,  
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labour  
and the march,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,  
Down the edges, through the passes, up  
the mountains steep,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go  
the unknown ways,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,  
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep  
the mines within,  
We the surface broad surveying, we the  
virgin soil upheaving,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,  
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and  
the high plateaus,  
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting  
trail we come,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the con-  
tinental blood intervein'd,  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern,  
all the Northern,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless, restless race!  
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender  
love for all!  
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother mistress,  
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mis-  
tress, (bend your heads all),  
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impas-  
sive, weapon'd mistress,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,  
By those swarms upon our rear we must never  
yield or falter,  
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there  
behind us urging,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,  
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the  
dead quickly fill'd,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet  
and never stopping,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!  
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?  
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the  
gap is fill'd,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,  
Falling in they beat for us, with the  
Western movement beat,  
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front,  
all for us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,  
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters  
    with their slaves,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,  
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous  
    and the wicked,  
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living,  
    all the dying,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,  
Through these shores amid the shadows, with  
    the apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting, bowling orb!  
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering  
    suns and planets,  
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,  
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in  
    embryo wait behind,  
We to-day's procession heading as we the route  
    for travel clearing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you daughters of the West!  
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers  
    and you wives!

Never must you be divided, in our ranks  
    you move united,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!  
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have  
    done your work),  
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and  
    tramp amid us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful  
    and the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us  
    the tame enjoyment,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?  
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd  
    and bolted doors?  
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?  
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged  
    nodding on our way?  
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks  
    to pause oblivious,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,  
Far, far off the daybreak call—hark! how loud and clear I  
    hear it wind,

Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring  
to your places,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

## TO YOU

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the  
walks of dreams,  
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your  
feet and hands,  
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, man-  
ners, troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate  
away from you,  
Your true soul and body appear before me,  
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops,  
work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eat-  
ing, drinking, suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that  
you be my poem,  
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,  
I have loved many women and men, but I love none bet-  
ter than you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb,  
I should have made my way straight to you long ago,  
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have  
chanted nothing but you.

I will leave all and come and make hymns of you,  
None has understood you, but I understand you,  
None has done justice to you, you have not done jus-  
tice to yourself,



None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfection in you,  
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will never consent to subordinate you,  
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre figure of all,  
From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of gold-colour'd light,  
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-colour'd light,  
From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing for ever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!  
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon yourself all your life,  
Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,  
What you have done returns already in mockeries,  
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what is their return?)  
The mockeries are not you,  
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,  
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,  
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from others or from yourself, they do not conceal you from me,  
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these balk others they do not balk me,

The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness,  
greed, premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not  
tallied in you,

There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good  
is in you,

No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,

No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure  
waits for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like  
carefully to you,

I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than  
I sing the songs of glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!

These shows of the East and West are tame  
compared to you,

These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you  
are immense and interminable as they,

These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes  
of apparent dissolution, you are he or she who is mas-  
ter or mistress over them,

Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, ele-  
ments, pain, passion, dissolution.

The hobbles fall from your ankles, you find  
an unfailing sufficiency,

Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the  
rest, whatever you are promulges itself,

Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided,  
nothing is scanted,

Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what  
you are picks its way.

## FRANCE

*The 18th Year of these States*

A great year and place,  
A harsh discordant natal scream out-sounding, to touch  
the mother's heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern sea,  
Heard over the waves the little voice,  
Saw the divine infant where she woke mournfully wailing,  
amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crash  
of falling buildings,  
Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running, nor  
from the single corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those  
borne away in the tumbrils,  
Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so  
shock'd at the repeated fusillades of the guns.

Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that  
long-accrued retribution?  
Could I wish humanity different?  
Could I wish the people made of wood and stone?  
Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

O Liberty! O mate for me!  
Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve,  
to fetch them out in case of need,  
Here too, though long repress, can never be destroy'd,  
Here too could rise at last murdering and ecstatic,  
Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

Hence I sign this salute over the sea,  
And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,

But remember the little voice that I heard wailing, and  
wait with perfect trust, no matter how long,  
And from to-day, sad and cogent I maintain the bequeath'd  
cause, as for all lands,  
And I send these words to Paris with my love,  
And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,  
For I guess there is latent music yet in France, floods of it,  
O I hear already the bustle of instruments, they will soon  
be drowning all that would interrupt them,  
O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,  
It reaches hither, it swells me to joyful madness,  
I will run transpose it in words, to justify it,  
I will yet sing a song for you ma femme.

## MYSELF AND MINE

Myself and mine gymnastic ever,  
To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun,  
to sail a boat, to manage horses, to be-  
get superb children,  
To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home  
among common people,  
And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,  
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I  
welcome them also),  
But for the fibre of things and for inherent  
men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,  
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plen-  
teous supreme Gods, that the States may realise them  
walking and talking.

Let me have my own way,  
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account  
of the laws,  
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold  
up agitation and conflict,  
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that  
was thought most worthy.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly guilty of  
all your life?  
Will you turn aside all your life? will you grub and chatter  
all your life?  
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years,  
pages, languages, reminiscences,  
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak  
properly a single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,  
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh  
and modern continually.

I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I  
arouse unanswerable questions,  
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?  
What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by  
tender directions and indirections?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends,  
but listen to my enemies, as I myself do,  
I charge you for ever reject those who would expound me,  
for I cannot expound myself,

I charge that there be no theory of school founded  
    out of me,  
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vial!  
O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,  
I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early  
    riser, a steady grower,  
Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the  
    air, water, earth,  
I perceive I have no time to lose.

YEAR OF METEORS

(1859-60)

Year of meteors! brooding year!  
I would bind in words retrospective some of your  
    deeds and signs,  
I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad,  
I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair,  
    mounted the scaffold in Virginia,  
(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut  
    close, I watch'd,  
I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent,  
    but trembling with age and your unheal'd wounds  
    you mounted the scaffold);  
I would sing in my copious song your census returns  
    of the States,  
The tables of population and products, I would sing of  
    your ships and their cargoes,

The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some  
fill'd with immigrants, some from the isthmus with  
cargoes of gold,  
Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward comes  
would I welcome give,  
And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome to you from  
me, young prince of England!  
(Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you pass'd  
with your cortege of nobles?  
There in the crowds stood I, and singled you  
out with attachment);  
Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam  
up my bay,  
Well-shaped and stately the *Great Eastern* swam up my  
bay, she was six hundred feet long,  
Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small craft  
I forget not to sing;  
Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north  
flaring in heaven,  
Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and clear  
shooting over our heads,  
(A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of unearthly  
light over our heads,  
Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone);  
Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from them  
would I gleam and patch these chants,  
Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good—  
year of forebodings!  
Year of comets and meteors transient and strange—lo! even  
here one equally transient and strange!  
As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone,  
what is this chant,  
What am I myself but one of your meteors?

## WITH ANTECEDENTS

## 1

With antecedents,  
With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations  
of past ages,  
With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here,  
as I am,  
With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece, and Rome,  
With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb, and the Saxon,  
With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship,  
wars, and journeys,  
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the oracle,  
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the troubadour,  
the crusader, and the monk,  
With those old continents whence we have come to  
this new continent,  
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there,  
With the fading religions and priests,  
With the small shores we look back to from our own large  
and present shores,  
With countless years drawing themselves onward and arrived  
at these years,  
You and me arrived—America arrived and  
making this year,  
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

## 2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,  
We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,  
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we  
easily include them and more,



We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand  
amid evil and good,  
All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light,  
The very sun swings itself and its system of  
planets around us,  
Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days),  
I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,  
I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I  
reject no part.

(Have I forgotten any part? anything in the past?  
Come to me whoever and whatever, till I  
give you recognition.)

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,  
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god,  
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true  
without exception,  
I assert that all past days were what they must have been,  
And that they could no-how have been better  
than they were,  
And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,  
And that to-day and America could no-how be better  
than they are.

## 3

In the name of these States and in your and my  
name, the Past,  
And in the name of these States and in your and my name,  
the Present time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,  
And I know that both curiously conjoint in  
    the present time,  
(For the sake of him I typify, for the common average  
    man's sake, your sake if you are he),  
And that where I am or you are this present day, there is  
    the centre of all days, all races,  
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of  
    races and days, or ever will come.

# A BROADWAY PAGEANT

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## 1

Over the Western sea hither from Nippon come,  
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,  
Leaning back in their open barouches,  
    bare-headed, impassive,  
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad! I do not know whether others behold  
    what I behold,  
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon,  
    the errand-bearers,  
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in  
    the ranks marching,  
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends  
    to her pavements,  
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud  
    roar I love,  
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell  
    I love spit their salutes,  
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and  
    heaven-clouds canopy my city with a  
    delicate thin haze,  
When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at  
    the wharves, thicken with colours,  
When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,

When pennants trail and street-festoons hang  
from the windows,  
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers  
and foot-standers, when the mass is densest,  
When the façades of the houses are alive with people,  
when eyes gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,  
When the guests from the islands advance, when the  
pageant moves forward visible,  
When the summons is made, when the answer that waited  
thousands of years answers,  
I too rising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge  
with the crowd, and gaze with them.

## 2

Superb-faced Manhattan!  
Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.

To us, my city,  
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on  
opposite sides, to walk in the space between,  
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,  
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the  
race of eld,  
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings,  
hot with passion,  
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,  
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,  
The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us  
from the procession,

As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves  
changing before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from  
his island only,  
Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent  
itself appears, the past, the dead,  
The murky night-morning, of wonder  
and fable inscrutable,  
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,  
The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the  
Hebrews, the ancient of ancients,  
Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and  
more are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,  
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia,  
the coast beyond,  
The coast you henceforth are facing—you Libertad! from  
your Western golden shores,  
The countries there with their populations, the millions  
en-masse are curiously here,  
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols  
ranged along the sides or at the end, bonze,  
brahmin, and llama,  
Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,  
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic person,  
the secluded emperors,  
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the war-  
riors, the castes, all,  
Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from  
the Altay mountains,

From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing  
rivers of China,  
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental  
islands, from Malaysia,  
These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth  
to me, and are seiz'd by me,  
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendly held by them,  
Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves  
and for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,  
I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,  
I chant the world on my Western sea,  
I chant, copious the islands beyond, thick as stars  
in the sky,  
I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a  
vision it comes to me,  
I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,  
I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on  
those groups of sea-islands,  
My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,  
My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,  
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work,  
races reborn, refresh'd,  
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the old,  
the Asiatic renew'd as it must be,  
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world

## 3

And you Libertad of the world!  
You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and  
thousands of years,  
As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,

As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England  
sends her eldest son to you,  
The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,  
The ring is circled, the journey is done,  
The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the per-  
fume pours copiously out of the whole box.  
Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,  
Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for  
you are all,  
Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending  
messages over the archipelagoes to you,  
Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long? so  
wide the tramping?  
Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from  
Paradise so long?  
Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the  
while unknown, for you, for reasons?  
They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now  
be turn'd the other way also, to travel  
toward you thence,  
They shall now also march obediently eastward for  
your sake, Libertad.

## SEA-DRIFT

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### OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mock-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands, and the fields beyond, where the  
    child leaving his bed wander'd  
    alone, bareheaded, barefoot,  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting  
    as if they were alive,  
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
From your memories, sad brother, from the fitful risings  
    and fallings I heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen  
    as if with tears,  
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there  
    in the mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,



Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly  
    leaping beyond them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month  
    grass was growing,  
Up this seashore in some briers,  
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs  
    spotted with brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent,  
    with bright eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close,  
    never disturbing them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine! shine! shine!*  
*Pour down your warmth, great sun!*  
*While we bask, we two together.*

*Two together!*  
*Winds blow south, or winds blow north,*  
*Day come white, or night come black,*  
*Home, or rivers and mountains from home,*  
*Singing all time, minding no time,*  
*While we two keep together.*

Till of a sudden,  
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,  
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,  
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,  
The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow! blow! blow!*

*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;  
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,  
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,  
Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,  
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know,  
Yes, my brother, I know,  
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,  
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,  
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself  
    with the shadows,  
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds  
    and sights after their sorts,  
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,  
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,  
Following you, my brother.

*Soothe! soothe! soothe!*

*Close on its waves soothes the wave behind,*

*And again another behind embracing and lapping,  
every one close,  
But my love soothes not me, not me.*

*Low hangs the moon, it rose late,  
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes upon the land,  
With love, with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out  
among the breakers?  
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?*

*Loud! loud! loud!  
Loud I call to you, my love!  
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,  
Surely you must know who is here, is here,  
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon!  
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?  
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!  
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land! land! O land!  
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my  
mate back again if you only would,  
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars!  
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with  
some of you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat!  
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!*

*Pierce the woods, the earth,  
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols!  
Solitary here, the night's carols!  
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!  
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!  
O under that moon where she droops almost down  
    into the sea!  
O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft! sink low!  
Soft! let me just murmur,  
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,  
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate  
    responding to me,  
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,  
But not altogether still, for then she might not come  
    immediately to me.*

*Hither my love!  
Here I am! here!  
With this just-sustain'd note I announce  
    myself to you,  
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,  
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,  
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,  
Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!  
O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping  
    upon the sea!*

*O troubled reflection in the sea!  
O throat! O throbbing heart!  
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life; O songs of joy!  
In the air, in the woods, over fields,  
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!  
But my mate no more, no more with me!  
We two together no more.*

The aria sinking,  
All else continuing, the stars shining,  
The winds blowing, the notes of the  
    bird continuous echoing,  
With angry moans the fierce old  
    mother incessantly moaning,  
On the sand of Paumanok's shore grey and rustling,  
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping,  
    the face of the sea almost touching,  
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his  
    hair the atmosphere dallying,  
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at  
    last tumultuously bursting,  
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,  
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,  
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,  
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,  
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some  
    drown'd secret hissing,  
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul),  
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I  
have heard you,  
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,  
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,  
louder, and more sorrowful than yours,  
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within  
me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
O solitary me listening, never more shall I  
cease perpetuating you,  
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,  
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,  
Never again leave me to the peaceful child I was before  
what there in the night,  
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,  
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,  
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the  
night here somewhere),  
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then (for I will conquer it),  
The word final, superior to all,  
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;  
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time,  
you sea-waves?  
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,  
Delaying not, hurrying not,  
Whisper'd me through the night, and very  
plainly before daybreak,

Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,  
And again death, death, death, death,  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my  
    arous'd child's heart,  
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me  
    softly all over,  
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on  
    Paumanok's grey beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in  
    sweet garments, bending aside),  
The sea whisper'd me.

AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

1

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd where the ripples continually  
    wash you Paumanok,  
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,  
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries  
    for her castaways,  
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,

Held by this electric self out of the pride of which  
I utter poems,  
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,  
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all  
the land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to  
follow those slender windrows,  
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,  
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left  
by the tide,  
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other  
side of me,  
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old  
thought of likenesses,  
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

## 2

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,  
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,  
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me  
closer and closer,  
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.  
O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,  
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil  
upon me I have not once had the least idea who or  
what I am,



But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands  
yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory  
signs and bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word  
I have written,  
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to  
the sand beneath.

I perceive I have not really understood anything, not a  
single object, and that no man ever can,  
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to  
dart upon me and sting me,  
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

## 3

You oceans both, I close with you,  
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,  
knowing not why,  
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of débris,  
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,  
What is yours is mine, my father.

I too Paumanok,  
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and  
been wash'd on your shores,  
I too am but a trail of drift and débris,  
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast, my father,  
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me, my father,  
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the  
murmuring I envy.

## 4

Ebb, ocean of life (the flow will return),  
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not,  
deny not me,  
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I  
touch you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down  
where we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,  
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
See, the prismatic colours glistening and rolling),  
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,  
Buoy'd hither from many moods,  
one contradicting another,  
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,  
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of  
liquid or soil,  
Up just as much out of fathomless workings  
fermented and thrown,  
A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves  
floating, drifted at random,  
Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,

Just as much whence we come that blare of  
the cloud-trumpets,  
We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence,  
spread out before you,  
You up there walking or sitting,  
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

## TEARS

Tears! tears! tears!  
In the night, in solitude, tears,  
On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in  
by the sand,  
Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,  
Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head;  
O who is that ghost? that form in the dark, with tears?  
What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there  
on the sand?  
Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked  
with wild cries;  
O storm, embodied, rising, careering with soft steps  
along the beach!  
O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O  
belching and desperate!  
O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and regulated pace,  
But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then  
the unloosen'd ocean,  
Of tears! tears! tears!

## TO THE MAN-OF-WAR-BIRD

Thou who has slept all night upon the storm,  
Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
(Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascended'st,

And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee),  
Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,  
As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
(Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast).

Far, far at sea,  
After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the  
    shore with wrecks,  
With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene,  
The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
Thou also re-appearest.

Thou born to match the gale (thou art all wings),  
To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,  
Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
Days, even weeks untired and onward, through  
    spaces, realms gyrating,  
At dusk that look'd on Senegal, at morn America,  
That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-cloud,  
In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,  
What joys! what joys were thine!

#### ABOARD AT A SHIP'S HELM

Aboard at a ship's helm,  
A young steersman steering with care.

Through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,  
An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the  
    sea-reefs ringing,  
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.

For as on the alert, O steersman, you mind  
the loud admonition,  
The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away  
under her grey sails,  
The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious wealth  
speeds away gaily and safe.

But O the ship, the immortal ship! O ship aboard the ship!  
Ship of the body, ship of the soul,  
voyaging, voyaging, voyaging.

#### ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

On the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,  
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in  
black masses spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,  
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon  
to devour all,  
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,

The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,  
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars  
    only in apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another  
    night, the Pleiades shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden  
    shall shine out again,  
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out  
    again, they endure,  
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive  
    moons shall again shine.

Then, dearest child, mournest thou only for Jupiter?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,  
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,  
I give thee the first suggestion, the  
    problem and indirection),  
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,  
(Many the burials, many the days and  
    nights passing away),  
Something that shall endure longer even  
    than lustrous Jupiter,  
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

#### THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE

The world below the brine,  
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,  
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the  
    thick tangle, openings, and pink turf,

Different colours, pale grey and green, purple, white, and  
gold, the play of light through the water,  
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten,  
grass, rushes, and the aliment of the swimmers,  
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly  
crawling close to the bottom,  
The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or  
disporting with his flukes,  
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy  
sea-leopard, and the sting-ray,  
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-  
depths, breathing that thick-breathing air, as  
so many do,  
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air  
breathed by beings like us who walk this sphere,  
The change onward from ours to that of beings who  
walk other spheres.

## ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE

On the beach at night alone,  
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing  
her husky song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the  
clef of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,  
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large,  
suns, moons, planets,  
All distances of place however wide,  
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,  
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different,  
or in different worlds,

All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the  
fishes, the brutes,  
All nations, colours, barbarisms, civilisations, languages,  
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe,  
or any globe,  
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,  
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,  
And shall for ever span them and compactly hold  
and enclose them.

## SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS

## 1

To-day a rude brief recitative,  
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag  
or ship-signal,  
Of unnamed heroes in the ships—of waves spreading and  
spreading far as the eye can reach,  
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,  
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,  
Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of  
all intrepid sailors,  
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never  
surprise nor death dismay,  
Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee, old ocean,  
chosen by thee,  
Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time,  
and unitest nations,  
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,  
Indomitable, untamed as thee.



(Ever the heroes on water or on land, by ones  
or twos appearing,  
Ever the stock preserv'd and never lost, though rare,  
enough for seed preserv'd.)

## 2

Flaunt out, O sea, your separate flags of nations!  
Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!  
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul  
of man one flag above all the rest,  
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man  
elate above death,  
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid  
sailors and mates,  
And all that went down doing their duty,  
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains  
young or old,  
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er  
all brave sailors,  
All seas, all ships.

## PATROLLING BARNEGAT

Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running,  
Steady the roar of the gale, with  
incessant undertone muttering,  
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,  
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,  
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,  
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce slanting,  
Where through the murk the easterly  
death-wind breasting,  
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful  
and firm advancing,

(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the  
red signal flaring?)  
Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,  
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,  
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white  
combs careering,  
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling,  
the night confronting,  
That savage trinity warily watching.

## AFTER THE SEA-SHIP

After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,  
After the white-grey sails taut to their spars and ropes,  
Below, a myriad myriad waves hastening, lifting  
up their necks,  
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,  
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,  
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,  
Toward that whirling current, laughing and  
buoyant, with curves,  
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking  
displaced the surface,  
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the  
ocean yearnfully flowing,  
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and  
frolicsome under the sun,  
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam  
and many fragments,  
Following the stately and rapid ship, in  
the wake following.

## BY THE ROADSIDE

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### A BOSTON BALLAD

(1854)

To get betimes in Boston town I rose this morning early,  
Here's a good place at the corner, I must stand and  
see the show.

Clear the way there Jonathan!  
Way for the President's marshal—way for  
the government cannon!  
Way for the Federal foot and dragoons (and the  
apparitions copiously tumbling).

I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes will  
play Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops!  
Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff  
through Boston town.

A fog follows, antiques of the same come limping,  
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear  
bandaged and bloodless.

Why this is indeed a show—it has called the dead out  
of the earth!

The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see!  
Phantoms! phantoms countless by flank and rear!

Cock'd hats of mothly mould—crutches made of mist!  
Arms in slings—old men leaning on young men's shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms? what is all this chattering of bare gums?

Does the ague convulse your limbs? do you mistake your crutches for firelocks and level them?

If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see  
the President's marshal,

If you groan such groans you might balk  
the government cannon.

For shame old maniacs—bring down those toss'd arms, and  
let your white hair be,

Here gape your great grandsons, their wives gaze at them  
from the windows,

See how well dress'd, see how orderly  
they conduct themselves.

Worse and worse—can't you stand it? are you retreating?  
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then—pell-mell!

To your graves—back—back to the hills old limpers!  
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell you  
what it is, gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor, he shall send a  
committee to England,

They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with a cart  
to the royal vault,

Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick from the  
grave-clothes, box up his bones for a journey,  
Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you,  
black-bellied clipper,  
Up with your anchor—shake out your sails—steer straight  
toward Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out  
the government cannon,  
Fetch home the roarers from Congress, make another pro-  
cession, guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them;  
Look, all orderly citizens—look from  
the windows, women!  
The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue  
those that will not stay,  
Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on top  
of the skull.

You have got your revenge, old buster—the crown is come  
to its own, and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are a  
made man from this day,  
You are mighty cute—and here is one of your bargains.

#### EUROPE

##### *The 72nd and 73rd Years of These States*

Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,  
Like lightning it le'pt forth half startled at itself,  
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags, its hands tight to the  
throats of kings.

O hope and faith!  
O aching close of exiled patriots' lives!  
O many a sicken'd heart!  
Turn back unto this day and make yourselves afresh.

And you, paid to defile the People—you liars, mark!  
Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,  
For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming  
from his simplicity the poor man's wages,  
For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and  
laugh'd at in the breaking,  
Then in their power not for all these did the blows strike  
revenge, or the heads of the nobles fall;  
The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

But the sweetness of mercy brew'd bitter destruction, and  
the frighten'd monarchs come back,  
Each comes in state with his train, hangman,  
priest, tax-gatherer,  
Soldier, lawyer, lord, jailer, and sycophant.

Yet behind all lowering stealing, lo, a shape,  
Vague as the night, draped interminably, head, front, and  
form, in scarlet folds,  
Whose face and eyes none may see,  
Out of its robes only this, the red robes lifted by the arm,  
One finger crook'd pointed high over the top, like the head  
of a snake appears.

Meanwhile corpses lie in new-made graves, bloody corpses  
of young men,  
The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily, the bullets of princes  
are flying, the creatures of power laugh aloud,  
And all these things bear fruits, and they are good.

Those corpses of young men,  
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets, those hearts  
    pierc'd by the grey lead,  
Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere  
    with unslaughter'd vitality.

They live in other young men, O kings!  
They live in brothers again ready to defy you,  
They were purified by death, they were taught and exalted.  
Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom but grows seed  
    for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,  
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and  
    the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of  
    tyrants let loose,  
But it stalks invisibly over the earth,  
    whispering, counselling, cautioning.

Liberty, let others despair of you—I never despair of you.

Is the house shut? is the master away?  
Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching,  
He will soon return, his messengers come anon.

#### A HAND-MIRROR

Hold it up sternly—see this it sends back (who is it?  
    is it you?)  
Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,  
No more a flashing eye, no more a sonorous voice  
    or springy step,  
Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,  
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's  
    face, venerealee's flesh,

Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach  
sour and cankerous,  
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,  
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,  
Words babble, hearing and touch callous,  
No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex;  
Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,  
Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

## GODS

Lover divine and perfect Comrade,  
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,  
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
Be thou my God.

O Death (for Life has served its turn),  
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,  
Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,  
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul),  
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,  
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,  
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,



Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,  
Be ye my Gods.

## GERMS

Forms, qualities, lives, humanity, language, thoughts,  
The ones known, and the ones unknown, the ones  
    on the stars,  
The stars themselves, some shaped, others unshaped,  
Wonders as of those countries, the soil, trees, cities, in-  
    habitants, whatever they may be,  
Splendid suns, the moons and rings, the countless  
    combinations and effects,  
Such-like, and as good as such-like, visible here or any-  
    where, stand provided for in a handful of space, which  
    I extend my arm and half enclose with my hand,  
That containing the start of each and all, the virtue, the  
    germs of all.

## THOUGHTS

Of ownership—as if one fit to own things could not at  
    pleasure enter upon all, and incorporate them into  
    himself or herself;  
Of vista—suppose some sight in arriere through the forma-  
    tive chaos, presuming the growth, fullness, life, now  
    attain'd on the journey,  
(But I see the road continued, and the  
    journey ever continued);  
Of what was once lacking on earth, and in due time has  
    become supplied—and of what will yet be supplied,  
Because all I see and know I believe to have its main pur-  
    port in what will yet be supplied.

## WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in  
columns before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,  
and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured  
with much applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## PERFECTIONS

Only themselves understand themselves and the  
like of themselves,  
As souls only understand souls.

## O ME! O LIFE!

O me! O life! of the questions of these recurring,  
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd  
with the foolish,  
Of myself for ever reproaching myself (for who more  
foolish than I, and who more faithless?)  
Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of  
the struggle ever renew'd,  
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid  
crowds I see around me,  
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the  
rest me intertwined,  
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid  
these, O me, O life?

*Answer*

That you are here—that life exists and identity,  
That the powerful play goes on, and you may  
contribute a verse.

## TO A PRESIDENT

All you are doing and saying is to  
America dangled mirages,  
You have not learn'd of Nature—of the politics of Nature  
you have not learn'd the great  
amplitude, rectitude, impartiality,  
You have not seen that only such as they are  
for these States,  
And that what is less than they must sooner or later lift off  
from these States.

## I SIT AND LOOK OUT

I sit and look upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon  
all oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish  
with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying,  
neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacher-  
ous seducer of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love at-  
tempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see  
martyrs and prisoners,  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots  
who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,

I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
persons upon labourers, the poor, and upon negroes,  
and the like;  
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting  
look out upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.

## TO RICH GIVERS

What you give me I cheerfully accept,  
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money, as I  
rendezvous with my poems,  
A traveller's lodging and breakfast as I journey through  
the States—why should I be ashamed to own such  
gifts? why to advertise for them?  
For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon  
man and woman,  
For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all  
the gifts of the universe.

## THE DALLIANCE OF THE EAGLES

Skirting the river road (my forenoon walk, my rest),  
Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance  
of the eagles,  
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,  
The clinching, interlocking claws, a living,  
fierce, gyrating wheel,  
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling  
mass tight grappling,  
In tumbling, turning, clustering loops,  
straight downward falling,  
Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull,  
A motionless still balance in the air, then  
parting, talons loosing,

Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their  
separate diverse flight,  
She hers, he his, pursuing.

## ROAMING IN THOUGHT

(*After reading HEGEL*)

Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that  
is Good steadily hastening towards immortality,  
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge  
itself and become lost and dead.

## A FARM PICTURE

Through the ample open door of the  
peaceful country barn,  
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,  
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

## A CHILD'S AMAZE

Silent and amazed even when a little boy,  
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God  
in his statements,  
As contending against some being or influence.

## THE RUNNER

On a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,  
He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,  
He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,  
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.

## BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

Women sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,  
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful  
than the young.

MOTHER AND BABE

I see the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother,  
The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them  
    long and long.

THOUGHT

Of obedience, faith, adhesiveness;  
As I stand aloof and look there is to me something profoundly affecting in large masses of men following the lead of those who do not believe in men.

VISOR'D

A mask, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,  
Concealing her face, concealing her form,  
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,  
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.

THOUGHT

Of Justice—as if Justice could be anything but the same ample law, expounded by natural judges and saviours,  
As if it might be this thing or that thing,  
    according to decisions.

GLIDING O'ER ALL

Gliding o'er all, through all,  
Through Nature, Time, and Space,  
As a ship on the waters advancing,  
The voyage of the soul—not life alone,  
Death, many deaths I'll sing.

HAST NEVER COME TO THEE AN HOUR

Hast never come to thee an hour,  
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these  
    bubbles, fashions, wealth?

These eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,  
To utter nothingness?

## THOUGHT

Of Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same  
chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indis-  
pensable to my own rights that others  
possess the same

## TO OLD AGE

I see in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself  
grandly as it pours in the great sea.

## LOCATIONS AND TIMES

Locations and times—what is it in me that meets them all,  
whenever and wherever, and makes me at home?  
Forms, colours, densities, odours—what is it in me that  
corresponds with them?

## OFFERINGS

A thousand perfect men and women appear,  
Around each gathers a cluster of friends, and gay children  
and youths, with offerings.

## TO THE STATES

*To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad*

Why reclining, interrogating? why myself  
and all drowsing?  
What deepening twilight—scum floating atop  
of the waters,  
Who are they as bats and night-dogs askant in the capitol?  
What a filthy Presidentiad! (O South, your torrid suns!  
O North, your arctic freezings!)

Are those really Congressmen; are those the great Judges?  
is that the President?

Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States  
sleep, for reasons;

(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lam-  
bent shoots we all duly awake,

South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we  
will surely awake).



## DRUM-TAPS

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### FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

First O songs for a prelude,  
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy  
in my city,  
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,  
How at once with lithe limb unwaiting a  
moment she sprang,  
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis!  
O truer than steel!)

How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of peace  
with indifferent hand,  
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and  
fife were heard in their stead,  
How you led to the war (that shall serve for our prelude,  
songs of soldiers),  
How Manhattan drum-taps led.

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,  
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of this  
teeming and turbulent city,  
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses,  
her incalculable wealth,  
With her million children around her, suddenly,  
At dead of night, at news from the south,  
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,  
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd  
out its myriads.

From the houses then and the workshops, and through  
all the doorways,  
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming.

To the drum-taps prompt,  
The young men falling in and arming,  
The mechanics arming (the trowel, the jack-plane, the  
blacksmith's hammer, tost aside with precipitation),  
The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge  
leaving the court,

The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping  
down, throwing the reins abruptly down on  
the horses' backs,

The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper,  
porter, all leaving;

Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,  
The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how  
to wear their accoutrements, they buckle  
the straps carefully,

Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of  
the musket-barrels,

The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around,  
the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,

Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city,  
and embark from the wharves,

(How good they look as they tramp down to the river,  
sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders!

How I love them! how I could hug them, with their brown  
faces and their clothes and knapsacks  
cover'd with dust!)

The blood of the city up—arm'd! arm'd!  
the cry everywhere,  
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from  
all the public buildings and stores,  
The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son  
kisses his mother,  
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak  
to detain him),  
The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding,  
clearing the way,  
The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd  
for their favourites,  
The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn  
along, rumble lightly over the stones,  
(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,  
Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business);  
All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd arming,  
The hospital service, the lint, bandages, and medicines,  
The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for  
in earnest, no mere parade now;  
War! an arm'd race is advancing! the welcome for battle,  
no turning away;  
War! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race is ad-  
vancing to welcome it.  
Mannahatta a-march—and it's O to sing it well!  
It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,  
The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve  
well the guns,  
Unlimber them! (no more as the past forty years for salutes  
for courtesies merely,  
Put in something now besides powder and wadding).

And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,  
Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,  
Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or covertly  
    frown'd amid all your children,  
But now you smile with joy exulting old Mannahatta.

## EIGHTEEN SIXTY-ONE

Arm'd year—year of the struggle,  
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for  
    you, terrible year,  
Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk  
    lispng cadenzas piano,  
But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing,  
    carrying a rifle on your shoulder,  
With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands, with  
    a knife in the belt at your side,  
As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous voice ringing  
    across the continent,  
Your masculine voice, O year, as rising amid  
    the great cities,  
Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you as one of the work-  
    men, the dwellers in Manhattan,  
Or with large steps crossing the prairies out of  
    Illinois and Indiana,  
Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait and  
    descending the Alleghanies,  
Or down from the great lakes or in Pennsylvania, or on  
    deck along the Ohio river,  
Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers,  
    or at Chattanooga on the mountain top,  
Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs clothed in  
    blue, bearing weapons, robust year,

Heard your determin'd voice launch'd forth  
again and again,  
Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of the  
round-lipp'd cannon,  
I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year,

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Through the windows—through the doors—burst like  
a ruthless force,  
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,  
Into the school where the scholar is studying;  
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he  
have now with his bride,  
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or  
gathering his grain,  
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill  
you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles blow!  
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels  
in the streets;  
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no  
sleepers must sleep in those beds,  
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—  
would they continue?  
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer  
attempt to sing?  
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case  
before the judge?  
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you  
bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor  
    the mother's entreaties,  
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie  
    awaiting the hearses,  
So strong you thump, O terrible drums—so loud  
    you bugles blow.

FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY  
LIKE A BIRD

From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,  
Around and around to soar to sing the idea of all,  
To the north betaking myself to sing  
    there arctic songs,  
To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself,  
    to Michigan then,  
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs  
    (they are inimitable);  
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to Missouri and  
    Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,  
To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Carolinas and Georgia  
    to sing theirs,  
To Texas and so along up toward California, to  
    roam accepted everywhere;  
To sing first (to the tap of the war-drum if need be),  
The idea of all, of the Western world  
    one and inseparable,  
And then the song of each member of these States.

## SONG OF THE BANNER AT DAYBREAK

*Poet*

O a new song, a free song,  
Flapping, flapping, flapping, flapping, by sounds,  
by voices clearer,  
By the wind's voice and that of the drum,  
By the banner's voice and child's voice and sea's voice  
and father's voice,  
Low on the ground and high in the air,  
On the ground where father and child stand,  
In the upward air where their eyes turn,  
Where the banner at daybreak is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are you?  
Words no more, for hearken and see,  
My song is there in the open air, and I must sing,  
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

I'll weave the chord and twine in,  
Man's desire and babe's desire, I'll twine them in, I'll  
put in life,  
I'll put the bayonet's flashing point, I'll let bullets  
and slugs whizz,  
(As one carrying a symbol and menace far into the future,  
Crying with trumpet voice, *Arouse and beware!*  
*Beware and arouse!*)  
I'll pour the verse with streams of blood, full of volition,  
full of joy,  
Then loosen, launch forth, to go and compete,  
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

*Pennant*

Come up here, bard, bard,  
Come up here, soul, soul,  
Come up here, dear little child,  
To fly in the clouds and winds with me, and play with  
the measureless light.

*Child*

Father, what is that in the sky beckoning to me  
with long finger?  
And what does it say to me all the while?

*Father*

Nothing, my babe, you see in the sky,  
And nothing at all to you it says—but look you, my babe,  
Look at these dazzling things in the houses, and see you  
the money-shops opening,  
And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl along the  
streets with goods;  
These, ah, these, how valued and toil'd for these!  
How envied by all the earth.

*Poet*

Fresh and rosy red the sun is mounting high,  
On floats the sea in distant blue careering  
through its channels,  
On floats the wind over the breast of the sea setting  
in toward land,  
The great steady wind from west or west-by-south,  
Floating so buoyant with milk-white foam on the waters.  
  
But I am not the sea nor the red sun,  
I am not the wind with girlish laughter,



Not the immense wind which strengthens, not the  
wind which lashes,  
Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body to  
terror and death,  
But I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,  
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,  
Which the birds know in the woods  
mornings and evenings,  
And the shore-sands know and the hissing wave, and that  
banner and pennant,  
Aloft there flapping and flapping.

### *Child*

O father it is alive—it is full of people—it has children,  
O now it seems to me it is talking to its children,  
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful!  
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast—O my father,  
It is so broad it covers the whole sky.

### *Father*

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,  
What you are saying is sorrowful to me, much  
it displeases me;  
Behold with the rest again I say, behold not banners  
and pennants aloft,  
But the well-prepared pavements behold, and mark the  
solid-walled houses.

### *Banner and Pennant*

Speak to the child O bard of Manhattan,  
To our children all, or north or south of Manhattan,  
Point this day, leaving all the rest, to us over all—and yet  
we know not why,

For what are we, mere strips of cloth profiting nothing,  
Only flapping in the wind?

*Poet*

I hear and see not strips of cloth alone,  
I hear the tramp of armies, I hear the challenging sentry,  
I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men,  
    I hear Liberty!  
I hear the drums beat and the trumpets blowing,  
I myself move abroad swift-rising flying then,  
I use the wings of the land-bird and use the wings of the  
    seabird, and look down as from a height,  
I do not deny the precious results of peace, I see populous  
    cities with wealth incalculable,  
I see numberless farms, I see the farmers working in their  
    fields or barns,  
I see mechanics working, I see buildings everywhere  
    founded, going up, or finish'd,  
I see trains of cars swiftly speeding along railroad tracks  
    drawn by the locomotives,  
I see the stores, depots, of Boston, Baltimore,  
    Charleston, New Orleans,  
I see far in the West the immense area of grain, I  
    dwell awhile hovering,  
I pass to the lumber forests of the North, and again to the  
    Southern plantation, and again to California;  
Sweeping the whole I see the countless profit, the busy  
    gatherings, earn'd wages,  
See the Identity formed out of thirty-eight spacious and  
    haughty States (and many more to come),  
See forts on the shores of harbours, see ships sailing  
    in and out;

Then over all (aye! aye!) my little and lengthen'd pennant  
shaped like a sword,  
Runs swiftly up indicating war and defiance—and now the  
halyards have rais'd it,  
Side of my banner broad and blue, side of  
my starry banner,  
Discarding peace over all the sea and land.

*Banner and Pennant*

Yet louder, higher, stronger, bard! yet  
farther, wider cleave!  
No longer let our children deem us riches and peace alone,  
We may be terror and carnage, and are so now,  
Not now are we any one of these spacious and haughty  
States (nor any five, nor ten),  
Nor market nor depot we, nor money-bank in the city,  
But these and all, and the brown and spreading land, and  
the mines below, are ours,  
And the shores of the sea are ours, and the rivers  
great and small,  
And the fields they moisten, and the crops and the  
fruits are ours,  
Bays and channels and ships sailing in and out are ours—  
while we over all,  
Over the area spread below, the three or four millions of  
square miles, the capitals,  
The forty millions of people,—O bard! in life  
and death supreme,  
We, even we, henceforth flaunt out masterful,  
high up above,  
Not for the present alone, for a thousand years  
chanting through you,  
This song to the soul of one poor little child.

*Child*

O my father, I like not the houses,  
They will never to me be any thing, nor do I like money,  
But to mount up there I would like, O father dear, that  
    banner I like,  
That pennant I would be and must be.

*Father*

Child of mine, you fill me with anguish,  
To be that pennant would be too fearful,  
Little you know what it is this day, and after this  
    day, for ever,  
It is to gain nothing, but risk and defy everything,  
Forward to stand in front of wars—and O, such wars!—  
    what have you to do with them?  
With passions of demons, slaughter, premature death?

*Banner*

Demons and death then I sing,  
Put in all, aye all will I, sword-shaped pennant for war,  
And a pleasure new and ecstatic, and the prattled  
    yearning of children,  
Blent with the sounds of the peaceful land and the liquid  
    wash of the sea,  
And the black ships fighting on the sea envelop'd in smoke,  
And the icy cool of the far, far north, with rustling  
    cedars and pines,  
And the whirr of drums and the sound of soldiers march-  
    ing, and the hot sun shining south,  
And the beach-waves combing over the beach on my East-  
    ern shore, and my Western shore the same,  
And all between those shores, and my ever running Mis-  
    sissippi with bends and chutes,

And my Illinois fields, and my Kansas fields, and my  
fields of Missouri,  
The Continent, devoting the whole identity without  
reserving an atom,  
Pour in! whelm that which asks, which sings, with all and  
the yield of all,  
Fusing and holding, claiming, devouring the whole,  
No more with tender lip, nor musical labial sound,  
But out of the night emerging for good, our voice  
persuasive no more,  
Croaking like crows here in the wind.

*Poet*

My limbs, my veins dilate, my theme is clear at last,  
Banner so broad advancing out of the night, I sing you  
haughty and resolute,  
I burst through where I waited long, too long,  
deafen'd and blinded,  
My hearing and tongue are come to me (a little  
child taught me),  
I hear from above, O pennant of war, your ironical  
call and demand,  
Insensate! Insensate! (yet I at any rate chant  
you), O banner!  
Not houses of peace indeed are you, nor any nor all their  
prosperity (if need be, you shall again have every  
one of those houses to destroy them,  
You thought not to destroy those valuable houses, standing  
fast, full of comfort, built with money,  
May they stand fast, then? not an hour except you above  
them and all stand fast);  
O banner, not money so precious are you, not farm prod-  
uce you, nor the material good nutriment,

Nor excellent stores, nor landed on wharves from the ships,  
Not the superb ships with sail-power or steam-power,  
fetching and carrying cargoes,  
Nor machinery, vehicles, trade, nor revenues—but you as  
henceforth I see you,  
Running up out of the night, bringing your cluster of stars  
(ever-enlarging stars),  
Divider of daybreak you, cutting the air, touch'd by the  
sun, measuring the sky,  
(Passionately seen and yearn'd for by one poor little child,  
While others remain busy or smartly talking, for ever  
teaching thrift, thrift);  
O you up there! O pennant! where you undulate like a  
snake hissing so curious,  
Out of reach, an idea only, yet furiously fought for, risking  
bloody death, loved by me,  
So loved—O you banner leading the day with stars brought  
from the night!  
Valueless, object of eyes, over all and demanding all—  
(absolute owner of all)—O banner and pennant!  
I too leave the rest—great as it is, it is nothing—houses,  
machines are nothing—I see them not,  
I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so broad, with  
stripes, I sing you only,  
Flapping up there in the wind.

RISE, O DAYS, FROM YOUR  
FATHOMLESS DEEPS

1

Rise, O days, from your fathomless deeps, till you  
loftier, fiercer sweep,

Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what  
the earth gave me,  
Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long I  
watch'd Niagara pouring,  
I travell'd the prairies over and slept on their breast, I  
cross'd the Nevadas, I cross'd the plateaus,  
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd  
out to sea,  
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm,  
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,  
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so  
high, curling over,  
I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,  
Saw from below what arose and mounted (O superb! O  
wild as my heart, and powerfull)  
Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd  
after the lightning,  
Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden  
and fast amid the din they chased each other  
across the sky;  
These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder,  
yet pensive and masterful,  
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,  
Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

## 2

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave me,  
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,  
Now we go forth to receive what the earth and sea  
never gave us,  
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through  
the mightier cities,

Something for us is pouring now more  
    than Niagara pouring,  
Torrents of men (sources and rills of the North-west, are  
    you indeed inexhaustible?)  
What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were those  
    storms of the mountains and sea?  
What, to passions I witness around me to-day? was  
    the sea risen?  
Was the wind piping the pipe of death under  
    the black clouds?  
Lo! from deeps more unfathomable, something more  
    deadly and savage,  
Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front—Cin-  
    cinnati, Chicago, unchain'd;  
What was that swell I saw on the ocean? behold  
    what comes here,  
How it climbs with daring feet and hands—how it dashes!  
How the true thunder bellows after the lightning—how  
    bright the flashes of lightning!  
How Democracy with desperate vengeful port strides on,  
    shown through the dark by those flashes of lightning!  
(Yet mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard  
    through the dark,  
In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

## 3

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike  
    with vengeful stroke!  
And do you rise higher than ever yet, O days, O cities!  
Crash heavier, heavier yet, O storms! you have  
    done me good,  
My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs your  
    immortal strong nutriment.



Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads through  
farms, only half satisfied,  
One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake, crawl'd on  
the ground before me,  
Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft,  
ironically hissing low;  
The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and left, I sped to  
the certainties suitable to me,  
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies  
and Nature's dauntlessness,  
I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only,  
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the water  
and air I waited long;  
But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied,  
I am glutted,  
I have witness'd the true lightning, I have witness'd  
my cities electric,  
I have lived to behold man burst forth and  
warlike America rise,  
Hence I will seek no more the food of the  
northern solitary wilds,  
No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea.

## VIRGINIA—THE WEST

The noble sire fallen on evil days,  
I saw with hand uplifted, menacing, brandishing,  
(Memories of old in abeyance, love and faith in abeyance),  
The insane knife toward the Mother of All.

The noble son on sinewy feet advancing,  
I saw, out of the land of prairies, land of Ohio's waters  
and of Indiana,

To the rescue the stalwart giant hurry  
    his plenteous offspring,  
Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on their shoulders.

Then the Mother of All with calm voice speaking,  
As to you Rebellious (I seemed to hear her say), why  
    strive against me, and why seek my life?  
When you yourself for ever provide to defend me?  
For you provided we Washington—and now these also.

#### CITY OF SHIPS

City of ships!  
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!  
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)  
City of the world! (for all races are here,  
All the lands of the earth make contributions here);  
City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!  
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirl  
    ing in and out with eddies and foam!  
City of wharves and stores—city of tall façades of  
    marble and iron!  
Proud and passionate city—mettlesome,  
    made, extravagant city!  
Spring up, O city—not for peace alone, but be  
    indeed yourself, warlike!  
Fear not—submit to no models but your own, O city!  
Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated you!  
I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you adopted  
    I have adopted,  
Good or bad I never question you—I love all—I do  
    not condemn anything,  
I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no more,

In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of  
war is mine,  
War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!

THE CENTENARIAN'S STORY

*Volunteer of 1861-2 (at Washington Park, Brooklyn,  
assisting the Centenarian)*

Give me your hand, old Revolutionary,  
The hill-top is nigh, but a few steps  
    (make room, gentlemen),  
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your hun-  
dred and extra years,  
You can walk, old man, though your eyes are almost done,  
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have  
    them serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means,  
On the plain below recruits are drilling and exercising,  
There is the camp, one regiment departs to-morrow,  
Do you hear the officers giving their orders?  
Do you hear the clank of the muskets?

Why, what comes over you now, old man?  
Why do you tremble and clutch my hand so convulsively?  
The troops are but drilling, they are yet  
    surrounded with smiles,  
Around them at hand the well-drest friends  
    and the women,  
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines down,  
Green the midsummer verdure and fresh blows  
    the dallying breeze,  
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm of the sea between.

But drill and 'parade are over, they march back to quarters,  
Only hear that approval of hands! hear what a clapping!

As wending the crowds now part and disperse—but  
    we, old man,  
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—  
    we must remain,  
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.

*The Centenarian*

When I clutch'd your hand it was not with terror,  
But suddenly pouring about me here on every side,  
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up the  
    slopes they ran,  
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see south  
    and south-east and south-west,  
Over hill, across lowlands, and in the skirts of woods,  
And along the shores, in mire (now fill'd over) came again  
    and suddenly raged,  
As eighty-five years a-gone no mere parade receiv'd with  
    applause of friends,  
But a battle which I took part in myself—aye, long ago as  
    it is, I took part in it,  
Walking then this hill-top, this same ground.

Aye, this is the ground,  
My blind eyes even as I speak behold it  
    re-peopled from graves,  
The years recede, pavements and stately houses disappear,  
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are mounted,  
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to bay.  
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes.  
Here we lay encamp'd, it was this time in summer also

As I talk I remember all, I remember the Declaration,  
It was read here, the whole army paraded, it was read  
to us here,  
By his staff surrounded the General stood in the middle,  
he held up his unsheath'd sword,  
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

'Twas a bold act then—the English war-ships  
had just arrived,  
We could watch down the lower bay where they  
lay at anchor,  
And the transports swarming with soldiers.

A few days more and they landed, and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,  
A veteran force furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle,  
But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd forward to  
engage the red-coats,  
Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,  
And how long and well it stood confronting death.

Who do you think that was marching steadily  
sternly confronting death?  
It was the brigade of the youngest men,  
two thousand strong,  
Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most of them known  
personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step  
toward Gowanus' waters,

Till of a sudden unlook'd for by defiles through the woods,  
gain'd at night,  
The British advancing, rounding in from the east, fiercely  
playing their guns,  
That brigade of the youngest was cut off and at  
the enemy's mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill,  
They made repeated desperate attempts to  
burst their environment,  
Then drew close together, very compact, their flag flying  
in the middle,  
But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning  
and thinning them!

It sickens me yet, that slaughter!  
I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face  
of the General,  
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British manoeuvr'd to draw us out for  
a pitch'd battle,  
But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments,  
Sallying forth we fought at several points, but in each the  
luck was against us,  
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it, push'd  
us back to the works on this hill,  
Till we turn'd menacing here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest men  
two thousand strong,  
Few return'd, nearly all remain in Brooklyn.

That and here my General's first battle,  
No women looking on nor sunshine to bask in, it did not  
conclude with applause,  
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness, in mist on the ground under  
a chill rain,  
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen,  
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord off  
against us encamp'd,  
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wine-glasses to-  
gether over their victory.

So dull and damp and another day,  
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,  
Silent as a ghost while they thought they were sure of him,  
my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,  
Down by the ferry lit by torches,  
hastening the embarkation;  
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were  
all passed over,  
And then (it was just ere sunrise), these eyes rested on him  
for the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom,  
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,  
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward the coming sun,  
I saw something different from capitulation.

*Terminus*

Enough, the Centenarian's story ends,  
The two, the past and present, have interchanged,  
I myself as connector, as chansonnier of a great future,  
am now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod?  
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the  
waters he cross'd,  
As resolute in defeat as other generals in  
their proudest triumphs?

I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward,  
I must preserve that look as it beam'd on you  
rivers of Brooklyn.

See—as the annual round returns the phantoms return,  
It is the 27th of August and the British have landed,  
The battle begins and goes against us, behold through the  
smoke Washington's face,  
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd forth  
to intercept the enemy,  
They are cut off, murderous artillery from the hills  
plays upon them,  
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently  
droops the flag,  
Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody wounds.  
In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn! I perceive you are more  
valuable than your owners supposed;



In the midst of you stands an encampment very old,  
Stands for ever the camp of that dead brigade.

#### CAVALRY CROSSING A FORD

A line in long array where they wind  
    betwixt green islands,  
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun—  
    hark to the musical clank,  
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering  
    stop to drink,  
Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a  
    picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,  
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just enter-  
    ing the ford—while,  
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,  
The guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind.

#### BIVOUAC ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE

I see before me now a travelling army halting,  
Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and the  
    orchards of summer,  
Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt, in  
    places rising high,  
Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall  
    shapes dingily seen,  
The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some  
    away up on the mountain,  
The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming,  
    large-sized, flickering,  
And over all the sky—the sky! far, far out of reach, studded,  
    breaking out, the eternal stars.

## AN ARMY CORPS ON THE MARCH

With its cloud of skirmishers in advance,  
With now the sound of a single shot snapping like a whip  
and now an irregular volley,  
The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense  
brigades press on,  
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun—the  
dust-cover'd men,  
In columns rise and fall to the undulations  
of the ground,  
With artillery interspers'd—the wheels rumble,  
the horses sweat,  
As the army corps advances.

## BY THE BIVOUAC'S FITFUL FLAME

By the bivouac's fitful flame,  
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and  
slow—but first I note,  
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and  
woods' dim outline,  
The darkness lit by spots are kindled fire, the silence,  
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,  
The shrubs and trees (as I lift my eyes they seem to be  
stealthily watching me),  
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender  
and wondrous thoughts,  
Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of  
those that are far away;  
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,  
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

## COME UP FROM THE FIELDS, FATHER

Come up from the fields, father, here's a letter  
from our Pete,  
And come to the front door, mother, here's a letter from  
thy dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,  
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,  
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in  
the moderate wind,  
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on  
the trellis'd vines,  
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?  
Smell you the buckwheat where the bees  
were lately buzzing?)  
Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain,  
and with wondrous clouds,  
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the  
farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,  
But now from the fields come, father, come at  
the daughter's call,  
And come to the entry, mother, to the front door  
come right away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous,  
her steps trembling,  
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,  
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,

O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O  
    stricken mother's soul!  
All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches  
    the main words only,  
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry  
    skirmish, taken to hospital,*  
*At present low, but will soon be better.*

Ah, now the single figure to me,  
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its  
    cities and farms,  
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,  
By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother* (the just-grown daughter  
    speaks through her sobs,  
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd),  
*See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

Alas, poor boy, he will never be better (nor may-be needs  
    to be better, that brave and simple soul),  
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,  
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,  
She with thin form presently drest in black,  
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully  
    sleeping, often waking,  
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with  
    one deep longing,  
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life  
    escape and withdraw,  
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE  
FIELD ONE NIGHT

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;  
When you, my son and my comrade, dropt at my  
side that day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a  
look I shall never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine, O boy, reach'd up as you  
lay on the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the  
even-contested battle,  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I  
made my way,  
Found you in death so cold, dear comrade, found your  
body, son of responding kisses (never again  
on earth responding),  
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool  
blew the moderate night-wind,  
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the  
battle-field spreading,  
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the  
fragrant silent night,  
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long,  
long I gazed,  
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side lean-  
ing my chin in my hands,  
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you,  
dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,  
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you, my son  
and my soldier,  
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new  
ones upward stole,

Vigil final for you, brave boy (I could not save you, swift  
was your death,  
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we  
shall surely meet again),  
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as  
the dawn appear'd,  
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd  
well his form,  
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and  
carefully under feet,  
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son  
in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,  
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night  
and battle-field dim,  
Vigil for boy of responding kisses (never again  
on earth responding),  
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how  
as day brighten'd,  
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well  
in his blanket,  
And buried him where he fell.

A MARCH IN THE RANKS HARD-PREST, AND  
THE ROAD UNKNOWN

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,  
A route through a heavy wood, with muffled steps  
in the darkness,  
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the  
sullen remnant retreating,  
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a  
dim-lighted building,  
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the  
dim-lighted building,

'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now  
an impromptu hospital,  
Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the  
pictures and poems ever made,  
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving  
candles and lamps,  
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red  
flame and clouds of smoke,  
By these crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the floor,  
some in the pews laid down,  
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in danger  
of bleeding to death (he is shot in the abdomen),  
I stanch the blood temporarily (the youngster's face is  
white as a lily),  
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene fain  
to absorb it all,  
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in ob-  
scurity, some of them dead,  
Surgeon operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of  
ether, the odour of blood,  
'The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard  
outside also fill'd,  
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers,  
some in the death-spasm sweating,  
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted  
orders or calls,  
The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the glint  
of the torches,  
These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I  
smell the odour,  
Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in,*  
*my men, fall in;*

But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-smile gives he me,  
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth  
to the darkness,  
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on  
in the ranks,  
The unknown road still marching.

A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK  
GREY AND DIM

A sight in camp in the daybreak grey and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by  
the hospital tent,  
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out  
there untended lying,  
Over each the blanket spread, ample  
brownish woollen blanket,  
Grey and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,  
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the  
first just lift the blanket;  
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-  
grey'd hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
Who are you, my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step—and who are you, my  
child and darling?  
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?  
Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as  
of beautiful yellow-white ivory;



Young man, I think I know you—I think this face is the face  
of the Christ himself,  
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D  
VIRGINIA'S WOODS

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,  
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet  
(for 'twas autumn),  
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;  
Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat (easily all  
could I understand),  
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet  
this sign left,  
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,  
*Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,  
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a  
scene of life,  
Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt,  
alone, or in the crowded street,  
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes the  
inscription rude in Virginia's woods,  
*Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.*

NOT THE PILOT

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his ship into  
port, though beaten back and many times baffled;  
Not the pathfinder penetrating inland weary and long,  
By deserts parch'd, snows chill'd, rivers wet, perseveres  
till he reaches his destination,

More than I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded, to  
compose a march for these States,  
For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be,  
years, centuries hence.

YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D  
BENEATH ME

Year that trembled and reel'd beneath me!  
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I  
breathed froze me,  
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me,  
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to myself,  
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled?  
And sullen hymns of defeat?

THE WOUND-DRESSER

1

An old man bending I come among new faces,  
Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,  
Come tell us, old man, as from young men and maidens  
that love me,  
(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and  
urge relentless war,  
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and  
I resign'd myself,  
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently  
watch the dead;)  
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious  
passions, these chances,  
Of unsurpass'd heroes (was one side so brave? the other  
was equally brave;)  
Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,

Of those armies so rapid, so wondrous, what saw you  
to tell us?  
What stays with you latest and deepest?  
of curious panics,  
Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous  
what deepest remains?

## 2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,  
What you ask of my days those the strangest and sudden  
your talking recalls,  
Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with  
sweat and dust,  
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout  
in the rush of successful charge,  
Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift-running  
river they fade,  
Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils  
or soldiers' joys,  
(Both I remember well—many the hardships, few the joys,  
yet I was content).

But in silence, in dreams' projections,  
While the world of gain and appearance and  
mirth goes on,  
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the im-  
prints off the sand,  
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors (while for  
you up there,  
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be  
of strong heart).

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,  
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,

Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,  
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass, the ground,  
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under  
    the roof'd hospital,  
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return,  
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one  
    do I miss,  
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries  
    a refuse pail,  
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied,  
    and fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,  
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,  
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,  
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I  
    never knew you,  
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you,  
    if that would save you.

## 3

On, on I go (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)  
The crush'd head I dress (poor crazed hand tear not  
    the bandage away),  
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and  
    through I examine,  
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye,  
    yet life struggles hard,  
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!  
In mercy come quickly).

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,  
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the  
    matter and blood,

Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and  
side-falling head,  
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on  
the bloody stump,  
And has not yet looked on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,  
But a day or two more, for see the frame all  
wasted and sinking,  
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with  
the bullet-wound,  
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so  
sickening, so offensive,  
While the attendant stands behind aside me holding  
the tray and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,  
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,  
These and more I dress with impassive hand (yet deep in  
my breast a fire, a burning flame).

## 4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,  
Returning, resuming, I thread my way  
through the hospitals,  
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,  
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,  
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,  
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have  
cross'd and rested,  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips).

## LONG, TOO LONG, AMERICA

Long, too long, America,  
Travelling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from  
joys and prosperity only,  
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing,  
grappling with direst fate and recoiling not,  
And now to conceive and show to the world what your  
children en-masse really are,  
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your children  
en-masse really are?)

## GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN

## 1

Give me the splendid silent sun with all his  
beams full-dazzling,  
Give me juicy autumnal fruit ripe and red  
from the orchard,  
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,  
Give me an arbour, give me the trellis'd grape,  
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving  
animals teaching content,  
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west  
of the Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars,  
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers  
where I can walk undisturb'd,  
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom I  
should never tire,  
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the noise  
of the world a rural domestic life,  
Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself,  
for my own ears only,

Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O Nature  
your primal sanities!

These demanding to have them (tired with ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the war-strife),  
These to procure incessantly asking, rising in cries  
from my heart,  
While yet incessantly asking still I adhere to my city,  
Day upon day and year upon year, O city,  
walking your streets,  
Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time refusing to  
give me up,  
Yet giving to make me glutt'd, enrich'd of soul, you give  
me forever faces;  
(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting,  
reversing my cries,  
I see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for).

## 2

Keep your splendid silent sun,  
Keep your woods, O Nature, and the quiet places  
by the woods,  
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and your corn-  
fields and orchards,  
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where the Ninth-  
month bees hum;  
Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant and endless along the trottoirs!  
Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me comrades and lovers by the thousand!  
Let me see new ones every day—let me hold new ones by the hand every day!  
Give me such shows—give me the streets of Manhattan!

Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give me  
the sound of the trumpets and drums!  
(The soldiers in companies or regiments—some starting  
away, flush'd and reckless,  
Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks, young,  
yet very old, worn, marching, noticing nothing;)  
Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed  
with black ships!  
O such for me! O an intense life, full to  
repletion and varied!  
The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!  
The saloon of the steamer! the crowded excursion for me!  
the torchlight procession!  
The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled  
military wagons following;  
People, endless, streaming, with strong  
voices, passions, pageants,  
Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with beat-  
ing drums as now,  
The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank of  
muskets (even the sight of the wounded),  
Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus!  
Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

#### DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

The last sunbeam  
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,  
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,  
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,  
Up from the east the silvery round moon,



Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,  
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,  
And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,  
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,  
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,  
And the small drums steady whirring,  
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,  
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,  
(On the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,  
Two veterans son and father dropt together,  
And the double grave awaits them).

Now nearer blow the bugles,  
And the drums strike more convulsive,  
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,  
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,  
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,  
('Tis some mother's large transparent face,  
In heaven brighter growing).

O strong dead-march, you please me!  
O moon immense with your silvery face, you soothe me!  
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!  
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,  
And the bugles and the drums give you music,  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,  
My heart gives you love.

OVER THE CARNAGE ROSE  
PROPHETIC A VOICE

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems  
of freedom yet,  
Those who love each other shall become invincible,  
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,  
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder  
of the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,  
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate  
themselves for one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's comrade,  
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another an  
Oregonese, shall be friends triune,  
More precious to each other than all the riches  
of the earth.

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come,  
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and  
wafted beyond death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to  
see manly affection,

The most dauntless and rude shall touch face  
to face lightly,  
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,  
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger than  
hoops of iron,  
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of  
lovers tie you.

(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?  
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?  
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)

#### I SAW OLD GENERAL AT BAY

I saw old General at bay,  
(Old as he was, his grey eyes yet shone out in  
battle like stars),  
His small force was now completely hemmed in,  
in his works,  
He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines,  
a desperate emergency,  
I saw a hundred and more step forth from the ranks, but  
two or three were selected,  
I saw them receive their orders aside, they listen'd with  
care, the adjutant was very grave,  
I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely  
risking their lives.

#### THE ARTILLERYMAN'S VISION

While my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the wars  
are over long,

And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the  
vacant midnight passes,  
And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just  
hear the breath of my infant,  
There in the room as I wake from sleep this vision  
presses upon me;  
The engagement opens there and then in fantasy unreal,  
The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously ahead, I hear  
the irregular snap! snap!  
I hear the sound of the different missiles, the short *t-h-t!*  
*t-h-t!* of the rifle-balls,  
I see the shells exploding leaving small white clouds, I  
hear the great shells shrieking as they pass,  
The grape like the hum and whirr of wind through the  
trees (tumultuous now the contest rages),  
All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail before me again,  
The crashing and smoking, the pride of the men  
in their pieces,  
The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece and selects  
a fuse of the right time,  
After firing I see him lean aside and look eagerly off to  
note the effect;  
Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging (the  
young colonel leads himself this time  
with brandish'd sword),  
I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys (quickly fill'd  
up, no delay),  
I breathe the suffocating smoke, then the flat clouds hover  
low concealing all;  
Now a strange lull for a few seconds, not a shot fired  
on either side,  
Then resumed the chaos louder than ever, with eager calls  
and orders of officers,

While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts  
to my ears a shout of applause (some special success),  
And ever the sound of the cannon far or near (rousing  
even in dreams a devilish exultation and all the old  
mad joy in the depths of my soul),  
And ever the hastening of infantry shifting positions, bat-  
teries, cavalry, moving hither and thither,  
(The falling, dying, I heed not, the wounded dripping and  
red I heed not, some to the rear are hobbling),  
Grime, heat, rush, aide-de-camps galloping by or on  
a full run,  
With the patter of small arms, the warning *s-s-t* of the rifles  
(these in my vision I hear or see),  
And bombs bursting in air, and at night the  
vari-colour'd rockets.

#### ETHIOPIA SALUTING THE COLOURS

Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,  
With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and  
bare bony feet?  
Why rising by the roadside here, do you the colours greet?  
(’Tis while our army lines Carolina’s sands and pines,  
Forth from thy hovel door thou, Ethiopia, com’st to me,  
As under doughty Sherman I march toward the sea.)  
*Me master years a hundred since from my parents sunder’d,  
A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is caught,  
Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.*  
No further does she say, but lingering all the day,  
Her high-borne turban’d head she wags, and rolls  
her darkling eye,  
And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

What is it, fateful woman, so blear, hardly human?  
Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow,  
    red, and green?  
Are the things so strange and marvellous you see  
    or have seen?

## NOT YOUTH PERTAINS TO ME

Not youth pertains to me,  
Nor delicatessen, I cannot beguile the time with talk,  
Awkward in the parlour, neither a dancer nor elegant,  
In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still, for learn-  
    ing inures not to me,  
Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—yet there are two or  
    three things inure to me,  
I have nourish'd the wounded and sooth'd many  
    a dying soldier,  
And at intervals waiting or in the midst of camp,  
Composed these songs.

## RACE OF VETERANS

Race of veterans—race of victors!  
Race of the soil, ready for conflict—race of  
    the conquering march!  
(No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd race),  
Race henceforth owning no law but the law of itself,  
Race of passion and the storm.

## WORLD, TAKE GOOD NOTICE

World, take good notice, silver stars fading,  
Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,  
Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,  
Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,  
Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.

## O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE-BOY

O tan-faced prairie-boy,  
Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,  
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till at last  
among the recruits,  
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we but look'd  
on each other,  
When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me.

## LOOK DOWN, FAIR MOON

Look down, fair moon, and bathe this scene,  
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on faces  
ghastly, swollen, purple,  
On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd wide,  
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon.

## RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in  
time be utterly lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly  
softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;  
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—  
I draw near,  
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face  
in the coffin.

## HOW SOLEMN AS ONE BY ONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

How solemn as one by one,  
As the ranks returning worn and sweaty, as the men file by  
where I stand,

As the faces the masks appear, as I glance at the faces  
    studying the masks,  
(As I glance upward out of this page studying you, dear  
    friend, whoever you are),  
How solemn the thought of my whispering soul to each in  
    the ranks, and to you,  
I see behind each mask that wonder a kindred soul,  
O the bullet could never kill what you really  
    are, dear friend,  
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are;  
The soul! yourself I see, great as any, good as the best,  
Waiting secure and content, which the bullet  
    could never kill,  
Nor the bayonet stab, O friend.

AS I LAY WITH MY HEAD IN  
YOUR LAP, CAMERADO

As I lay with my head in your lap, camerado,  
The confession I made I resume, what I said to you and  
    the open air I resume,  
I know I am restless and make others so,  
I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,  
For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws,  
    to unsettle them,  
I am more resolute because all have denied me than I  
    could ever have been had all accepted me,  
I heed not and have never heeded either experience, cau-  
    tions, majorities, nor ridicule,  
And the threat of what is call'd hell is little or  
    nothing to me,  
And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or  
    nothing to me;  
Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with



me, and still urge you, without the least idea what  
is our destination,  
Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly  
quell'd and defeated.

## DELICATE CLUSTER

Delicate cluster! flag of teeming life!  
Covering all my lands—all my seashores lining!  
Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through the smoke  
of battle pressing!  
How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant!)  
Flag cerulean—sunny flag, with the orbs of night dappled!  
Ah, my silvery beauty—ah, my woolly white and crimson!  
Ah, to sing the song of you, my matron mighty!  
My sacred one, my mother.

## TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN

Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?  
Did you seek the civilian's peaceful  
and languishing rhymes?  
Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?  
Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to under-  
stand—nor am I now;  
(I have been born of the same as the war was born,  
The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love  
well the martial dirge,  
With slow wail and convulsive throb leading  
the officer's funeral;)  
What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore  
leave my works,  
And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and  
with piano-tunes,  
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

LO, VICTRESS ON THE PEAKS

Lo, Victress on the peaks,  
 Where thou with mighty brow regarding the world,  
 (The world, O Libertad, that vainly  
     conspired against thee),  
 Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after  
     thwarting them all,  
 Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,  
 Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal soundless and bloom  
     —lo, in these hours supreme,  
 No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor  
     mastery's rapturous verse,  
 But a cluster containing night's darkness and  
     blood-dripping wounds,  
 And psalms of the dead.

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

(*Washington City, 1865*)

Spirit whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours!  
 Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets;  
 Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts (yet onward  
     ever unfaltering pressing),  
 Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage  
     scene—electric spirit,  
 That with muttering voice through the war now closed,  
     like a tireless phantom flitted,  
 Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and  
     beat the drum,  
 Now as the sound of drum, hollow and harsh to the last,  
     reverberates round me,  
 As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return  
     from the battles,

As the muskets of the young men yet lean  
    over their shoulders,  
As I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders,  
As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them appear-  
    ing in the distance, approach and pass  
    on, returning homeward,  
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro to the  
    right and left,  
Evenly lightly rising and falling while the steps keep time;  
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale as  
    death next day,  
Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips close,  
Leave me your pulses of rage—bequeath them to me—  
    fill me with currents convulsive,  
Let them scorch and blister out of my chants when  
    you are gone,  
Let them identify you to the future in these songs.

## ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

Adieu, O soldier,  
You of the rude campaigning (which we shared),  
The rapid march, the life of the camp,  
The hot contention of opposing fronts, the long manœuvre,  
Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus, the  
    strong terrific game,  
Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains of time  
    through you and like of you all fill'd,  
With war and war's expression.

Adieu, dear comrade,  
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,  
Myself and this contentious soul of mine,  
Still on our own campaigning bound,

Through untried roads with ambushes opponents lined,  
Through many a sharp defeat and many a  
    crisis, often baffled,  
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight  
    out—aye here,  
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression,

TURN, O LIBERTAD

Turn, O Libertad, for the war is over,  
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more,  
    resolute, sweeping the world,  
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the past,  
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past,  
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of  
    kings, slavery, caste,  
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—  
    give up that backward world,  
Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the trailing past,  
But what remains remains for singers for you—wars to  
    come are for you,  
(Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you, and  
    the wars of the present also inure;)  
Then turn, and be not alarm'd, O Libertad—turn  
    your undying face,  
To where the future, greater than all the past,  
Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,  
(Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying  
    the tent-ropes),  
In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-stretching cir-  
    cuits and vistas again to peace restored,

To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas beyond,  
to the South and the North,  
To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to  
attest my songs,  
To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mississippi,  
To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the woods,  
To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the  
prairies spreading wide,  
To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the  
sane impalpable air;  
And responding they answer all (but not in words),  
The average earth, the witness of war and  
peace, acknowledges mutely,  
The prairie draws me close, as the father to bosom  
broad the son,  
The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish me  
to the end,  
But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs.

# MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

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WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

1

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky  
    in the night,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,  
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!  
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!  
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that  
    hides the star!  
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless  
    soul of me!  
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the  
    white-wash'd palings,  
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped  
    leaves of rich green,  
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the  
    perfume strong I love,

With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush  
    in the dooryard,  
With delicate-colour'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves  
    of rich green,  
A sprig with its flower I break.

## 4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,  
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,  
The hermit withdrawn to himself,  
    avoiding the settlements,  
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,  
Death's outlet song of life (for well, dear  
    brother, I know,  
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die).

## 5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately  
    the violets peep'd from the ground, spotting  
    the grey débris,  
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing  
    the endless grass,  
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its  
    shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,  
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink  
    in the orchards,  
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
Night and day journeys a coffin.

## 6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,  
Through day and night with the great cloud  
    darkening the land,  
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities  
    draped in black,  
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-  
    veil'd women standing,  
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus  
    of the night,  
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces  
    and the unbared heads,  
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and  
    the sombre faces,  
With dirges through the night, with the shout and voices  
    rising strong and solemn,  
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd  
    around the coffin,  
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where  
    amid these you journey,  
With the tolling, tolling bells' perpetual clang,  
Here, coffin that slowly passes,  
I give you my sprig of lilac.

## 7

(Nor for you, for one alone,  
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,  
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for  
    you, O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,  
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,



But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,  
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,  
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,  
For you and the coffins all of you, O death.)

## 8

O western orb, sailing the heaven,  
Now I know what you must have meant as a month  
    since I walk'd,  
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,  
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me  
    night after night,  
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side  
    (while the other stars all look'd on),  
As we wander'd together the solemn night (for something  
    I know not what kept me from sleep),  
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west  
    how full you were of woe,  
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the  
    cool transparent night,  
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the nether-  
    ward black of the night,  
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where  
    you, sad orb,  
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

## 9

Sing on there in the swamp,  
O singer, bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I  
    hear your call,  
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,  
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,  
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

## 10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one  
there I loved?  
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul  
that has gone?  
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from the east and west,  
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western  
sea, till there on the prairies meeting,  
These and with these and the breath of my chant,  
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

## 11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?  
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,  
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,  
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the grey  
smoke lucid and bright,  
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent,  
sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,  
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale  
green leaves of the trees prolific,  
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river,  
with a wind-dapple here and there,  
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against  
the sky, and shadows,  
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and  
stacks of chimneys,

And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the  
workmen homeward returning.

## 12

Lo, body and soul—this land,  
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and  
hurrying tides, and the ships,  
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the  
light, Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,  
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with  
grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,  
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,  
The gentle soft-born measureless light,  
The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,  
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,  
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

## 13

Sing on, sing on, you grey-brown bird,  
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant  
from the bushes,  
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on, dearest brother, warble your reedy song,  
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!  
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!  
You only I hear—yet the star holds me (but  
will soon depart),  
Yet the lilac with mastering odour holds me.

## 14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,  
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring,  
    and the farmers preparing their crops,  
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its  
    lakes and forests,  
In the heavenly aerial beauty (after the perturb'd winds  
    and the storms),  
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing,  
    and the voices of children and women,  
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships  
    how they sail'd,  
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields  
    all busy with labour,  
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on,  
    each with its meals and minutia of daily usages,  
And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the  
    cities pent—lo, then and there,  
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me  
    with the rest,  
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,  
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred  
    knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one  
    side of me,  
And the thought of death close-walking the other  
    side of me,  
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the  
    hands of companions,  
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,

Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp  
in the dimness,  
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,  
The grey-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,  
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From the deep secluded recesses,  
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,  
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,  
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,  
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,  
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed  
come, come unfalteringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,  
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously  
sing the dead,  
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,  
Loved in the flood of thy bliss, O death.*

*From me to thee glad serenades,  
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and  
feastings for thee,  
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread  
sky are fitting,  
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose  
voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields  
and the prairies wide,  
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming  
wharves and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O death.*

## 15

*To the tally of my soul,  
Loud and strong kept up the grey-brown bird,  
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.*

*Loud in the pines and cedars dim,  
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,  
And I with my comrades there in the night.*

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,  
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,  
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,  
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with  
missiles I saw them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and  
torn and bloody,  
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs (and  
all in silence),  
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,  
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,  
I saw the débris and débris of all the slain soldiers  
of the war,  
But I saw they were not as was thought,  
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,  
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,  
And the wife and the child and the  
musing comrade suffer'd,  
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

## 16

Passing the visions, passing the night,  
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,  
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song  
of my soul,  
Victorious song death's outlet song, yet varying  
ever-altering song,  
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling,  
flooding the night,

Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and  
yet again bursting with joy,  
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,  
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,  
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,  
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming,  
returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,  
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,  
communing with thee,  
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,  
The song, the wondrous chant of the grey-brown bird,  
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,  
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance  
full of woe,  
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call  
of the bird,  
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever  
to keep, for the dead I loved so well,  
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and  
this for his dear sake,  
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,  
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we  
sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,



While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel  
grim and daring;  
    But O heart! heart! heart!  
    O the bleeding drops of red,  
    Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up—for you the flag is hung—for you the bugle trills,  
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you  
    the shores a-crowding,  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their  
    eager faces turning;  
    Here Captain! dear father!  
    This arm beneath your head!  
    It is some dream that on the deck,  
    You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage  
    closed and done,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
    Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!  
    But I with mournful tread,  
    Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead.

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DA

(May 4, 1865)

Hush'd be the camps to-day,  
And soldiers, let us drape our war-worn weapons,

And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,  
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,  
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,  
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing, poet, in our name,  
Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in  
camps, know it truly.

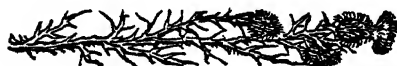
As they invault the coffin there,  
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one verse,  
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN

This dust was once the man,  
Gentle, plain, just, and resolute, under  
whose cautious hand,  
Against the foulest crime in history known in any  
land or age,  
Was saved the Union of these States.

## BY BLUE ONTARIO'S SHORE

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### 1

By blue Ontario's shore,  
As I mused of these warlike days and of peace return'd,  
and the dead that return no more,  
A Phantom gigantic, superb, with stern visage accosted me,  
*Chant me the poem, it said, that comes from the soul of*  
*America, chant me the carol of victory,*  
*And strike up the marches of Libertad, marches*  
*more powerful yet,*  
*And sing me before you go the song of the*  
*throes of Democracy.*

(Democracy, the destin'd conqueror yet treacherous  
lip-smiles everywhere,  
And death and infidelity at every step.)

### 2

A Nation announcing itself,  
I myself make the only growth by which I  
can be appreciated,  
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in  
my own forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,  
What we are we are, nativity is answer  
enough to objections,  
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,  
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,

We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the  
variety of ourselves,  
We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves,  
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence  
over the world,  
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing  
attacks to scorn.

Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves,  
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are beautiful or sinful in ourselves only.

(O Mother—O Sisters dear!  
If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us,  
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)

3

Have you thought there could be but a single supreme?  
There can be any number of supremes—one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another, or one life countervails another.

All is eligible to all,  
All is for individuals, all is for you,  
No condition is prohibited, not God's or any.

All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport  
with the universe.

Produce great Persons, the rest follows.

4

Piety and conformity to them that like,  
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,

I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,  
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your lives!

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue, ques-  
tioning every one I meet,  
Who are you that wanted only to be told what  
you knew before?  
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you  
in your nonsense?

(With pangs and cries as thine own, O bearer  
of many children,  
These clamours wild to a race of pride I give.)

O land, would you be freer than all that has  
ever been before?  
If you would be freer than all that has been before, come  
listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance, civilisation, delicatessen,  
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,  
Beware the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,  
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of  
states and men.

## 5

Ages, precedents, have long been  
accumulating undirected materials,  
America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their  
work and pass'd to other spheres,  
A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its  
own at all hazards,  
Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound, initiates the  
true use of precedents,  
Does not repel them or the past or what they have pro-  
duced under their forms,  
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly  
borne from the house,  
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door, that it was  
fittest for its days,  
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped  
heir who approaches,  
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period one nation must lead,  
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,  
Here is not merely a nation but a teeming  
Nation of nations,  
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast  
doings of the day and night,  
Here is what moves in magnificent masses  
careless of particulars,  
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combativeness,  
the soul loves,  
Here the flowing trains, here the crowds, equality, diver-  
sity, the soul loves.

## 6

Land of lands and bards to corroborate!  
Of them standing among them, one lifts to the light a  
west-bred face,

To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd both  
    mother's and father's,  
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,  
Built of the common stock, having room for  
    far and near,  
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,  
Attracting it body and soul to himself, hanging on its neck  
    with incomparable love,  
Plunging his seminal muscle into its  
    merits and demerits,  
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars,  
    vocal in him,  
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,  
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes,  
    Columbia, Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves  
    lovingly in him,  
If the Atlantic coast stretch or the Pacific coast stretch, he  
    stretching with them North or South,  
Spanning between them East and West, and touching  
    whatever is between them,  
Growths growing from him to offset the growths of pine,  
    cedar, hemlock, live-oak, locust, chestnut, hickory,  
    cottonwood, orange, magnolia,  
Tangles as tangled in him as any canebrake or swamp,  
He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated  
    with northern transparent ice,  
Off him pasturage sweet and natural as  
    savanna, upland prairie,  
Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of  
    the fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle,  
His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to  
    good and evil,

Surrounding the essences of real things, old times  
and present times,  
Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes  
of red aborigines,  
Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo  
stature and muscle,  
The haughty defiance of the Year One, war, peace, the  
formation of the Constitution,  
The separate States, the simple elastic  
scheme, the immigrants,  
The Union always swarming with blatherers and always  
sure and impregnable,  
The unsurvey'd interior, log-houses, clearings, wild  
animals, hunters, trappers,  
Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, tempera-  
ture, the gestation of new States,  
Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members  
duly coming up from the uttermost parts,  
Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and farm-  
ers, especially the young men,  
Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships, the  
gait they have of persons who never knew how it felt  
to stand in the presence of superiors,  
The freshness and candour of their physiognomy, the copi-  
ousness and decision of their phrenology,  
The picturesque looseness of their carriage, their  
fierceness when wrong'd,  
The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their  
curiosity, good temper, and open-handedness, the  
whole composite make,  
The prevailing ardour and enterprise,  
the large amateness,



The perfect equality of the female with the male, the fluid  
movement of the population,  
The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries,  
whaling, gold-digging,  
Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines  
intersecting all points,  
Factories, mercantile life, labour-saving machinery, the  
North-east, North-west, South-west,  
Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap,  
southern plantation life,  
Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it  
upon the ruins of all the rest,  
On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin! then your life  
or ours to the stake, and respite no more.

## 7

(Lo, high toward heaven, this day,  
Liberated, from the conqueress' field return'd,  
I mark the new aureola around your head,  
No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce,  
With war's flames and the lambent lightnings playing,  
And your port immovable where you stand,  
With still the inextinguishable glance and the clinch'd  
and lifted fist,  
And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner  
utterly crush'd beneath you,  
The menacing arrogant one that strode and advanced with  
his senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife,  
The wide-swelling one, the braggart that would yesterday  
do so much,  
To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of  
all the earth,  
An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)

8

Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive  
and ever keeps vista,  
Others adorn the past, but you, O days of the present,  
I adorn you,  
O days of the future I believe in you—I isolate myself  
for your sake,  
O America, because you build for mankind I build for you,  
O well-beloved stone-cutters, I lead them who plan with  
decision and science,  
Lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.

(Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to  
the next age!  
But damn that which spends itself with no thought of the  
stain, pains, dismay, feebleness, it is bequeathing.)

9

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,  
I heard the voice arising demanding bards,  
By them all native and grand, by them alone can these  
States be fused into the compact organism of a Nation.

To hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion  
is no account,  
That only holds men together which aggregates all in a liv-  
ing principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body or  
the fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras these States with veins full of poetical  
stuff most need poets, and are to have the greatest,  
and use them the greatest,

Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so  
much as their poets shall.

(Soul of love and tongue of fire!  
Eye to pierce the deepest deeps and sweep the world!  
Ah, Mother, prolific and full in all besides, yet how  
long barren, barren?)

## 10

Of these States the poet is the equable man,  
Not in him but off from him things are grotesque, eccentric,  
fail of their full returns,  
Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its  
place is bad,  
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion,  
neither more nor less,  
He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,  
He is the equaliser of his age and land,  
He supplies what wants supplying, he checks  
what wants checking,  
In peace out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich,  
thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging agriculture,  
arts, commerce, lighting the study of man,  
the soul, health, immortality, government,  
In war he is the best backer of the war, he fetches artillery  
as good as the engineer's, he can make every word he  
speaks draw blood,  
The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by  
his steady faith,  
He is no arguer, he is judgment (Nature  
accepts him absolutely),  
He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling  
round a helpless thing,

As he sees the farthest he has the most faith,  
His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things,  
In the dispute on God and eternity he is silent,  
He sees eternity less like a play with a  
    prologue and denouement,  
He sees eternity in men and women, he does not see men  
    and women as dreams or dots.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals,  
For that, the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,  
The attitude of him cheers up slaves and  
    horrifies foreign despots.

Without extinction is Liberty, without retrograde  
    is Equality,  
They live in the feelings of young men and  
    the best women,  
(Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the earth  
    been always ready to fall for Liberty).

11

For the great Idea,  
That, O my brethren, that is the mission of poets.

Songs of stern defiance ever ready,  
Songs of the rapid arming and the march,  
The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead the  
    flag we know,  
Warlike flag of the great Idea.

(Angry cloth I saw there leaping!  
I stand again in leaden rain your flapping folds saluting,  
I sing you over all, flying beckoning through the fight--  
    O the hard-contested fight!

The cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles—the  
    hurtled balls scream,  
The battle-front forms amid the smoke—the volleys pour  
    incessant from the line,  
Hark, the ringing word *Charge!*—now the tussle and the  
    furious maddening yells,  
Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,  
Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,  
Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

## 12

Are you he who would assume a place to teach or be a  
    poet here in the States?  
The place is august, the terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach here may well prepare himself  
    body and mind,  
He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden,  
    make lithe himself,  
He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with many  
    and stern questions.

Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America?  
Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?  
Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics,  
    geography, pride, freedom, friendship of the land? its  
    substratums and objects?  
Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day  
    of the first year of Independence, sign'd by the Com-  
    missioners, ratified by the States, and read by Wash-  
    ington at the head of the army?  
Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?

Do you see who have left all feudal processes and  
poems behind them, and assumed the poems and  
processes of Democracy?

Are you faithful to things? do you teach what the land  
and sea, the bodies of men, womanhood, amateness,  
heroic angers, teach?

Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?

Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies  
whirls, fierce contentions? are you very strong? are  
you really of the whole People?

Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?  
Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animat-  
ing now to life itself?

Have you vivified yourself from the maternity  
of these States?

Have you too the old ever-fresh  
forbearance and impartiality?

Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity?  
for the last-born? little and big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my America?

Is it uniform with my country?

Is it not something that has been better told  
or done before?

Have you not imported this or the spirit of it in some ship?  
Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness?—is the good  
old cause in it?

Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets, politi-  
cians, literats, of enemies' lands?

Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone  
is still here?

Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?

Does it sound with trumpet-voice the proud victory of the  
Union in that secession war?

Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?  
Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear  
again in my strength, gait, face?

Have real employments contributed to it? original makers,  
not mere amanuenses?

Does it meet modern discoveries, calibres, facts,  
face to face?

What does it mean to American persons, progresses, cities?  
Chicago, Kanada, Arkansas?

Does it see behind the apparent custodians the real cus-  
todians standing, menacing, silent, the mechanics,  
Manhattanese, Western men, Southerners, signifi-  
cant alike in their apathy and in the promptness  
of their love?

Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally be-  
fallen, each temporiser, patcher, outsider, partialist,  
alarmist, infidel, who has ever ask'd  
anything of America?

What mocking and scornful negligence?

The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons,  
By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

## 13

Rhymes and rhymers pass away, poems distill'd from  
poems pass away,

The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass,  
and leave ashes,

Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the  
soil of literature,

America justifies itself, give it time, no disguise can de-  
ceive it or conceal from it, it is impassive enough,

Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them,  
If its poets appear it will in due time advance to meet them,  
there is no fear of mistake,  
(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd till his coun-  
try absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it).

He masters whose spirit masters, he tastes sweetest who  
results sweetest in the long run,  
The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint;  
In the need of songs, philosophy, an appropriate native  
grand-opera, shipcraft, any craft.  
He or she is greatest who contributes the greatest  
original practical example.

Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears  
on the streets,  
People's lips salute only doers, lovers,  
satisfiers, positive knowers,  
There will shortly be no more priests, I say their  
work is done,  
Death is without emergencies here, but life is  
perpetual emergencies here,  
Are your body, days, manners, superb? after death you  
shall be superb,  
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way  
with irresistible power;  
How dare you place anything before a man?

14

Fall behind me States!  
A man before all—myself, typical, before all.

Give me the pay I have served for,  
Give me to sing the songs of the great Idea, take all the rest,



I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised riches,  
I have given alms to every one that ask'd, stood up for  
the stupid and crazy, devoted my income and  
labour to others,

Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience  
and indulgence toward the people, taken off my hat  
to nothing known or unknown,

Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and with  
the young, and with the mothers of families,

Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them by  
trees, stars, rivers,

Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or  
defiled my body,

Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully  
claim'd for others on the same terms,

Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted  
from every State,

(Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to  
breathe his last,

This arm, this hand, this voice, have  
nourish'd, rais'd, restored,

To life recalling many a prostrate form);

I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of  
the taste of myself,

Rejecting none, permitting all.

(Say, O Mother, have I not to your thought been faithful?  
Have I not through life kept you and yours before me?)

## 15

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things,  
It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great,

It is I who am great or to be great, it is You up there,  
or any one,  
It is to walk rapidly through  
civilisations, governments, theories,  
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form individuals.

Underneath all, individuals,  
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,  
The American compact is altogether with individuals,  
The only government is that which makes  
minute of individuals,  
The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to  
one single individual—namely to You.

(Mother! with subtle sense severe, with the naked sword  
in your hand,  
I saw you at last refuse to treat but  
directly with individuals.)

16

Underneath all, Nativity,  
I swear I will stand by my own nativity, pious or impious,  
so be it;  
I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,  
Men, women, cities, nations, are only  
beautiful from nativity.

Underneath all is the Expression of love for  
men and women,  
(I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent modes  
of expressing love for men and women,  
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love for  
men and women).

I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,  
(Talk as you like, he only suits these States whose manners favour the audacity and sublime turbulence of the States).

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature, governments, ownerships, I swear I perceive other lessons,  
Underneath all to me is myself, to you yourself (the same monotonous old song).

## 17

O I see flashing that this America is only you and me,  
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,  
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, are you and me,  
Its Congress is you and me, the officers, capitols, armies,  
ships, are you and me,  
Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,  
The war (that war so bloody and grim, the war I will  
henceforth forget), was you and me,  
Natural and artificial are you and me,  
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and me,  
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I dare not shirk any part of myself,  
Not any part of America good or bad,  
Not to build for that which builds for mankind,  
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes.  
Not to justify science nor the march of equality,  
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn  
belov'd of time.

I am for those that have never been master'd,  
For men and women whose tempers have  
never been master'd,

For those whom laws, theories, conventions,  
can never master.

I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth,  
Who inaugurate one to inaugurate all.

I will not be outfaced by irrational things,  
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic upon me,  
I will make cities and civilisations defer to me,  
This is what I have learnt from America—it is the amount,  
and it I teach again.

(Democracy, while weapons were everywhere aim'd  
at your breast,

I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children, saw in  
dreams your dilating form,  
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)

18

I will confront these shows of the day and night,  
I will know if I am to be less than they,  
I will see if I am not as majestic as they,  
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they,  
I will see if I am to be less generous than they,  
I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and  
ships have meaning,  
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for them-  
selves, and I am not to be enough for myself.

I match my spirit against yours you orbs,  
growths, mountains, brutes,  
Copious as you are I absorb you all in myself, and become  
the master myself,

America isolated yet embodying all, what is it  
    finally except myself?  
These States, what are they except myself?

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalising, wicked,  
    it is for my sake,  
I take you specially to be mine, you terrible, rude forms.

(Mother, bend down, bend close to me your face,  
I know not what these plots and wars and  
    deferments are for,  
I know not fruition's success, but I know that through war  
    and crime your work goes on, and must yet go on.)

## 19

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,  
While the winds fann'd me and the waves came  
    trooping toward me,  
I thrill'd with the power's pulsations, and the charm of  
    my theme was upon me,  
Till the tissues that held me parted their ties upon me.

And I saw the free souls of poets,  
The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,  
Strange large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were disclosed to me.

## 20

O my rapt verse, my call, mock me not!  
Not for the bards of the past, not to invoke them have I  
    launch'd you forth,  
Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's shores,  
Have I sung so capricious and loud my savage song.

Bards for my own land only I invoke  
(For the war, the war is over, the field is clear'd),  
Till they strike up marches henceforth  
triumphant and onward,  
To cheer, O Mother, your boundless expectant soul.

Bards of the great Idea! bards of the peaceful inventions!  
(for the war, the war is over!)  
Yet bards of latent armies, a million soldiers  
waiting ever-ready,  
Bards with songs as from burning coals or the  
lightning's fork'd stripes!  
Ample Ohio's, Kanada's bards—bards of California! inland  
bards—bards of the war!  
You by my charm I invoke.

REVERSALS

Let that which stood in front go behind,  
Let that which was behind advance to the front,  
Let bigots, fools, unclean persons, offer new propositions,  
Let the old propositions be postponed,  
Let a man seek pleasure everywhere except in himself,  
Let a woman seek happiness everywhere except in herself



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